

FROM MENTALITÉS TO
ANTHROPOLOGICAL HISTORY
THEORY AND METHODS

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edited by
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Introduction.

***Mentalités* on the edge. Some reflections on 'anthropological history' in Poland**

Can a dialogue between Natalie Zemon Davis and three women born nearly 400 years ago, revolutionise Polish historiography?¹ Can Peter Burke's short book *What Is Cultural History*², translated to and published by a prestigious academic publishing house and bearing the status of 'a university textbook subsidised by the Minister of Science and Higher Education' introduce Polish 'anthropological history' into the mainstream of historiography? Can the new journal "Rocznik Antropologii Historii"³, devised as a meeting place for anthropologists and historians, turn the margins to the centre?⁴

¹ N.Z. Davis, *Kobiety na marginesach. Trzy siedemnastowieczne życiorysy* [*Women on the Margins. Three seventeenth-century lives*], translated by B. Hlebowicz, Warszawa 2012.

² P. Burke, *Historia kulturowa*, translated by J. Hunia, Kraków 2012. The editing house, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, also published Peter Burke's book on visual resources: c.f.: P. Burke, *Naoczność. Materiały wizualne jako świadectwa historyczne* [*Eyewitnessing. Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*], translated by J. Hunia, Kraków 2012.

³ "Rocznik Antropologii Historii" has been published since 2011 as a scientific journal affiliated with the Polish Historical Society.

⁴ Additionally, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe [PWN] simultaneously published a classical collection of essays by Robert Darnton, c.f.: R. Darnton, *Wielka masakra kotów i inne epizody francuskiej historii kultury* [*The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History*], translated by D. Guzowska, Warszawa 2012. PWN has thus launched a publishing series entitled "Mikrohistoria". Books published in 2011 also included *Return of Martin Guerre* by N.Z. Davis, with a foreword by Ewa Domańska, an acclaimed non-classical historiography researcher, c.f.: N.Z. Davis, *Powrót Martina Guerre'a* [*Return of Martin Guerre*], translated by P. Szulgit, Poznań 2011. Symptomatically enou-

Even if not, these and other publications, with the inclusion of 'anthropological history' in the curricula of historical studies⁵ or the emergence of new research groups, come as an evident sign of transformation in the Polish historiography in the recent decade. Some consider it as evidence of historiographical progress and development, for others it is just a fad sure to pass quickly. These co-existing and conflicting opinions reflects the necessity of discussion about anthropological history: its actual and required status in the discipline, the problems with self-identity of researchers interested in, sympathising with or even defining themselves with the anthropological approach. This collection of studies highlighting some of these questions is, in our opinion, an invitation for historians and anthropologists to discuss them. Our brief reflection presented here is the subjective and personal voice of the two historians involved in the process of legitimisation and mainstreaming anthropological history.

Polish 'anthropological historians', as we identify ourselves, do not make up a stable community integrated under the banner of emancipation. In this case it is rather a group of individual researchers sharing a sense of "being on the margins" of a historiographical mainstream and — less frequently — a strong sense of being a member of current historiographical schools, than a close-knit academic community at all. More often anthropological historians tend to identify themselves with specific paradigms or research trends such as oral history, semiotics, gender studies, microhistory and, last but not least, cultural history. Sometimes, a researcher's position in the *community* refers to their intellectual development due to of eminent researchers, who had influenced and enthused them with the 'history from cultural perspective' approach, those including: Jacek Banaszkiewicz, Andrzej Chwalba, Bogdan Rok or Ewa Domańska.

gh, these books have been published nearly 30 years after their first edition. The only exception is *Kobiety na marginesach...* originally published in 1995.

⁵ The first university programme in historical anthropology in Poland was launched in 2009 at the Institute of History of the Jagiellonian University upon the initiative of a team of historians: Andrzej Chwalba, Dobrochna Kałwa, Barbara Klich-Kluczevska. In 2012 the Pedagogical University in Kraków followed this idea and introduced a similar programme.

The specificity of anthropological history in Poland is being torn between its craving for originality, i.e. for creativity of new qualities in historical studies, and its sense of a being epigones, imitative with respect to the already classical historiographical models that had emerged many years ago. On the one hand, anthropological historians are aware of the great achievements and value of Polish scholarship, on the other hand, they see the need to catch up world historiography, to fill the gap through research on such issues as mentality, everyday life, cultural patterns etc. References to the world scholarship in these fields arouse an increasing annoyance for some historians and bring about accusations of being imitative. However references, for example to the French *Annales* School, the American theory of history, and, to a lesser degree, German *Altegeschichte* or Italian microhistory (known almost exclusively via the works of Carlo Ginzburg), serve quite practical purposes, as they are, with their canonical status, quite frequently employed to legitimise innovative concepts in historical research. Regardless of historians' actual reasons, we should ask about the use of the universal canon of 'anthropological history' in terms of peripheral areas of historical research.

We belong to a generation of researchers in their 30s and 40s who still call themselves 'historians', regardless of their theoretical and methodological approach. Perhaps this sense of belonging is determined by our intellectual development in the framework of the disciplinary structure of the Academy. We realise that our academic training was much more 'disciplined' than it is in the case with the younger generation of enthusiasts of 'anthropological history', with their inter- or trans-disciplinary educational background. They might not necessarily consider themselves as 'historians' but rather 'anthropological historians', or 'historical anthropologists'.

The terminology concerning 'anthropological history' seems to be semantically ambiguous and complex, which makes it difficult for historians to identify themselves with the discipline. The most common term is 'historical anthropology', successfully adopted and spontaneously used by Polish historians, including its critics. However, as historians we tend to use another, more accurate term of 'anthropological history' emphasising history as a primary field of research, accommodat-

ing anthropological theories, methods, and interpretative tools. A term semantically pretty close to such a sub-field is also 'cultural history', an equivalent of 'anthropological history' used in American and British historiography⁶.

'Anthropological history'/'historical anthropology' covers clearly defined research areas and methodological trends in world historiography or is associated directly with the use of anthropological methods in researching the past. In Poland however this concept has been much more extended, so in consequence its boundaries are now hard to precisely define. 'Anthropological history' takes in all outcasts and misfits in historiography, whether they like it or not. This concept has become the name for a method of historical research deviating through their themes or methods from the historiographical mainstream, which are subsequently cultural and anthropological studies using history, as well as a number of popular publications for the general public. The last ones have nothing in common with 'anthropological history' except for controversial, shared themes, such as family, sexuality, intimacy to mention the most 'catchy'.

Is this correct? Should we accept this confusing mix, or rather should we sift out the representatives of cultural history from ethnohistorians (ethnographers of history), methodologists (anthropological historians) and cultural researchers analysing historical phenomena? And should we not resign from the disciplinary *multi-kulti*, paradoxically, for the purity of the multi-disciplinary 'anthropological history'? In practice it seems neither possible to achieve nor necessary. Or maybe should we at least exclude the pop-history, and throw it out on its ear? Popularity of issues linked to or connected with the area of 'anthropological history' is, on the one hand, a developmental stimulus, and, on the other, a reason for disregard by some historians, suspicious of any use of history in culture in general, and pop-culture in particular.

Actually, semantic ambiguity may be give a hard time only to academic teachers creating new fields of study (which we have experienced ourselves) and methodologists seeking to put together a distinctive picture out of scattered pieces. Methodologists and theorists of history not

⁶ Cf. E. Domańska, *Posłowie*, in: N.Z. Davis, *Powrót Martina...*, pp. 197–200.

only do set the directions for an academic debate on this sub-discipline. They do much more. And in this sense, the situation has not changed for years. Like Wojciech Wrzosek and Ewa Domańska, who have been explaining the meaning of anthropological history or microhistory, today the younger generation of methodologists and historians are emphasising the role of anthropology in the development of historical research. They call for dissemination of the so-called 'Western' canon as well as the current of cultural and social anthropology. They also call for the dissemination of theoretical reflection among Polish historians, appearing to still be paralysed by the post-communist, or rather post-Marxist, fear of theory.

There is much to talk about considering the paradox of the co-existence of different paradigms and research fields that did not occur at the same time, such as the history of *mentalité*, the history of sexuality, the history of discourse, 'post-humanities' (post-colonial studies, animal studies), the history of the second degree etc. Despite such diversity and thematic richness, 'anthropological history' is still, and too very often associated by Polish historians with the history of *mentalité*. This specific example of mis-identification perfectly illustrates the dilemma faced by Polish anthropological historians. Years ago the history of *mentalité* had been deconstructed by Western historians, and consequently rejected as an unclear and simplifying criterion, though extensive fundamental studies based on this paradigm brought about a concrete outcome whose significance is still incontrovertible.

If we do not know the answers to many important questions posed once as part of the history of *mentalité*, should we catch up (and, hence, accept the status of backward historiography) or reject the epigone attitude and participate in a contemporary global historical discourse? Or should we find our own way, based on the return to 'traditional' issues of anthropological history, though analysed in terms of contemporary historical and humanistic discourses. Of equal importance is the need to break with the traditional forms of the historiographical narrative and propose a new narrative that will not be just a straightforward reception of Western models but a narrative accounting for the specificity of local history and research traditions.

The future of anthropological history is still unsettled. New ideas are yet to come, and hopefully they will provide answers to many of our questions inspired by the articles presented in the volume. They analyse not only the contemporary Polish historiography, but also propose new research areas and categories of historical analysis. To a certain extent, they reflect both the present state and, hopefully the future of anthropological history in Poland.

*Barbara Klich-Kluczevska,
Dobrochna Kałwa*

Dobrochna Kałwa

The split identity. The role of a historian's autobiographical memory in the research of contemporary history

Debate

In 1996, during a meeting of the Polish Historical Society in Krakow, a young historian presented the results of his studies on students' protests in Krakow in 1968. Among the historians gathered in the lecture hall there were also representatives of the generation which had taken part in these events (mostly active participants in the rallies and manifestations). Having listened to their comments and remarks provided during the lecture and the discussion which followed, I realised that some of the listeners assumed the double role of both witnesses and historians: their judgements and statements were not representative of the attitude of a historian, who makes conclusions according to generally accepted professional principles; they conveyed the attitude of an eyewitness. For these historians, at that particular time, their own autobiographical memory of past experiences constituted the basic, if not the only instrument used to verify the research paper produced by a historian who — contrary to a witness of the discussed events — could 'access' the past of 1968 only through 'reliable' sources (i.e. the documents of state provenance in this case). Therefore, the meeting in Krakow saw an encounter, as well as a form of confrontation, of the two perspectives from which the past is looked at: the historical reconstruction of events and the memory of a personal experience.

I have often witnessed similar situations when professional historians abandon the rules of historical cognition for a moment and give way

to their personal experience; the majority of such cases took place during seminars, lectures, conferences, but also in the statements delivered in the media, as well as in research papers, though the instances of the latter are relatively rare, while authors' experiences are usually hidden between the lines. The coexistence of the two perspectives — the experimental and the cognitive — is a phenomenon typical for the environment of researchers dealing with recent history which deserves more attention, since it touches upon the significant issue of the influence of historians' memory and, in a wider perspective, their cultural background in the form of the studies of recent history, as well as the question of the sense of their faith in maintaining transcendence and objectivism with regard to the subject of the research.

'The time of memory'

The above questions correspond to the issue of the studies of the phenomenon (or phenomena) of memory — a field of the humanities which has been developing rapidly since the 1980s. The area of interest to 'memory discipline'¹ covers such diverse and disparate matters as the forms of commemoration, the activity of public institutions (such as the state, schools, museums), public discourse on the past, historical consciousness, autobiographical memory and narration of the past experience, collective memory and the identity of memory communities, to mention only a few. In the face of this diversity of themes and interdisciplinarity, particular attention is attributable to theoretical reflection², con-

¹ K.L. Klein, *On the emergence of memory in historical discourse*, "Representations", 69 (2000), p. 1.

² M.in. P. Nora, *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoir*, "Representations", 26: Memory and Counter-Memory (1989), pp. 7–24; idem, *Czas pamięci*, translated by W. Dłuski, „Res Publica Nowa”, 7 (2001), pp. 37–43; J. Assmann, *Collective Memory and Cultural Identity*, translated by J. Czaplicka, "New German Critique", 65 (1995), pp. 125–133; idem, *Pamięć zbiorowa i tożsamość kulturowa*, "Borussia", 29 (2003), pp. 11–16; A. Assmann, *History, Memory, and the Genre of Testimony*, "Poetics Today" vol. 27, 2 (2006), pp. 261–273; S. Friedländer, *History, Memory, and the Historian: Dilemmas and Responsibilities*, "New German Critique", 80 (2000), pp. 3–15; B. Szacka, *Czas przeszły — pamięć — mit*, Warszawa 2006; *States of Memory. Continuities, Conflicts, and Transformation in National Retrospection*, ed. by J.K. Olick, Durham and London 2003; *Witness and Memory. The discourse of trauma*, ed. by A. Douglass, T.A. Vogler, New York, London 2003; J.K. Olick,

centrated on the following two issues: the manner of defining the term itself (as wide-ranging as unspecified³) and working out the instruments which would enable analysing social and cultural phenomena from the angle of memory. In other words, the points of interest here are the two fundamental though seemingly trivial questions: what is memory and what is the function of memory defined as such?

In this article, I shall focus on two categories of memory — autobiographical memory and collective memory — which refer differently to the relations between the individual on the one hand and his or her past experience and background on the other. Autobiographical memory is seemingly equivalent with the common understanding of memory as a compilation of reminiscences. Although it does mean the individual ability to record and reconstruct all experiences in life, i.e. to remember, recollect and reminisce, the range of the term is much wider. Autobiographical memory is not only the register of what happened and what was remembered, but also, if not above all, the psychological process

J. Robbins, *Social Memory Studies: From "Collective Memory" to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices*, "Annual Review of Sociology" vol. 24, 1 (1998), pp. 105–140; R. Traba, *Historia — przestrzeń dialogu*, Warszawa 2006; *Pamięć i polityka historyczna. Doświadczenia Polski i jej sąsiadów*, ed. by S.M. Nowinowski, J. Pomorski, R. Stobiecki, Łódź 2008; P.T. Kwiatkowski, *Pamięć zbiorowa społeczeństwa polskiego w okresie transformacji*, Warszawa 2008; B. Skarga, *Tożsamość ja i pamięć*, „Znak”, 5 (1995), pp. 4–18; M. Kula, *Miedzy przeszłością a przyszłością. O pamięci, zapominaniu i przewidywaniu*, Poznań 2004; J. Filipowicz, *Pojęcie pamięci społecznej w nauce polskiej*, „Kultura i Historia”, 2 (2002); *Przemiany pamięci społecznej a teoria kultury*, ed. by B. Korzeniewski, Poznań 2007; T. Maruszewski, *Pamięć autobiograficzna*, Gdańsk 2005; J. Kordys, *Pamięć i opowiadanie*, in: *Praktyki opowiadania*, ed. by B. Owczarek, Z. Mitosek, W. Grajewski, Kraków 2001, pp. 127–173; K. Kaniowska, *Antropologia i problem pamięci*, „Konteksty. Polska Sztuka Ludowa” vol. 57, 3/4 (2003), pp. 57–65.

³ The broadness of the term is evidenced by the practice of researchers who usually use a range of auxiliary terms next to the references to the theoretical concepts in order to specify the intended understanding of memory. For this reason in the literature on the subject the term memory is replaced by the collective memory, the autobiographical memory, the cultural memory, the communicative memory, the semantic memory, the sensoric memory, the long- and short-term memories, as well as the post-memory. Cf. T. Maruszewski, *op. cit.*; K. Kaniowska, *Postpamięć indywidualna — postpamięć zbiorowa jako kategoria poznania w antropologii*, in: *Pamięć i polityka historyczna...*, pp. 65–76.

of the on-going revision and reinterpretation of the 'archive of memories', through which a given individual provides meaning to his or her experience and, at the same time, maintains a sense of continuity and integrity of his or her identity⁴. The changeability and evolution of autobiographical memory is a common argument in order to question the reliability of information contained in memory-based sources. However, which is particularly evident to researchers on memory, the value of autobiographical material lies in the axiological sphere, the cognitive structures, the ways of arranging experiences into the history of one's life, the sphere of mentality, the psychological mechanisms and the individual identity.

Collective memory is a broader term, understood in more general terms as "something left of the past, or group activity about the past"⁵. Such a vast definition reflects researchers' efforts to conceptualise collective memory as a total and omnipresent phenomenon⁶ on the one hand and conveys its complexity and multidimensionality on the other. For the purposes of the analysis contained in this paper, I shall focus on two particular aspects concerning the relations between autobiographical memory and a critical reflection by a professional historian⁷. Firstly, collective memory is an amalgam of three types of components, namely the individuals' autobiographical memory of their own experience, the collective memory of the events and experiences established as shared by the group and the official memory, shaped within the framework of the memory policy put in practice⁸. These three spheres of memory — the individual, the collective and the official — merge and undergo

⁴ T. Maruszewski, *op. cit.*, p. 10; I. Knez, *Autobiographical memories for places*, "Memory", 14 (2006), pp. 359–377.

⁵ P. Nora, *Mémoire collective*, in: *La nouvelle histoire*, ed. by J. Le Goff, R. Chartier, J. Revel, Paris 1987, quoted in: J. Le Goff, *Historia i pamięć*, translated by A. Gronowska, J. Stryczyk, Warszawa 2007, p. 152.

⁶ In a sense, the collective memory can be treated as the Foucault's discourse, with its omnipresence, complementarity of dispersed statements, discursive practices, the function of power-knowledge.

⁷ See more on the direct reflection and the critical reflection in K. Zamorski, *Nostalgia i wzniosłość a refleksja krytyczna o dziejach. Kiedy „polityka historyczna” ma sens?*, in: *Pamięć i polityka historyczna...*, pp. 60–61.

⁸ B. Szacka, *op. cit.*, pp. 44–45.

constant negotiation as the determinants of both individual integrity and that individual's sense of being a member of the community.

Another equally significant issue is refers to the relations between memory and history. From Nora's classical perspective, memory seems to be the antithesis of history, i.e. anti-history⁹. The antinomy of the two categories is based not only on the differentiation between what constitutes knowledge and what constitutes memory; it also emphasises the diversity of the channels of distributing knowledge and memory and, above all, points to different attitudes to history within these two discourses. History is characterised by institutionalisation, professionalism and distance, contrary to memory, which is subjective, selective and which 'contains substantial emotional load and involves definite emphatic evaluation'¹⁰. Moreover, the two discourses are based on the disparate conventions of narration: the language of history is analytical and report-like, while the language of memory is poetic and figurative¹¹.

The thesis of the dichotomous relation between collective memory and history corresponds to the critical statements made by professional researchers with regard to common knowledge or historical myths, yet it is legitimate only as long as we speak of history as studied/described under the positivist or modernist paradigm, or of the selected linguistic aspects or the forms of institutionalisation or research practice. At present, after the linguistic turn, which undermined the status of history as an objective science, the dichotomy between history and memory was abolished, since the both are characterised by subjectivism, the selective nature of research problems and subjection to the functions which legitimise the common identity. As Krzysztof Pomian observed, history turned out to be 'only' one of the fields of the discourse of memory, while a historian is but one of the participants in the social game for memory:

⁹ P. Nora, *Between memory...* More on the concept of the anti-history in E. Domańska, *Historie niekonwencjonalne. Refleksja o przeszłości w nowej humanistyce*, Poznań 2006.

¹⁰ P.T. Kwiatkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

¹¹ A. Szpociński, P.T. Kwiatkowski, *Przeszłość jako przedmiot przekazu*, Warszawa 2006, pp. 21–22.

Ideally, a critical historian cannot identify with any of the sides to a [memory] conflict, or with any of the protagonists he or she writes about, which does not mean that his or her history is objective. ... The problem is that academic history is convinced that it is critical history, while in fact it adopts an identity-based attitude (i.e. it identifies itself with either of the conflicting sides). Therefore, one can say that history reflects the wars fought in politics and in the sphere of memory¹².

Therefore, historiography, the same as collective memory, appears subjective, local and present-oriented, which is particularly evident with regard to the studies of contemporary history. Due to the absence of any distance over time between the subject and the object of the studies, a historian dealing with recent history “can be in contact with the participants and witnesses of events, and the results of his or her work are subject to their judgement and confronted with their experiences, as well as with the remembered image of the past reconstructed by that historian”¹³, thus opening up new areas for further study. Yet at the same time, it means the requirement to challenge methodological problems which are closer to sociology and anthropology than history. A historian plays a double role here, namely that of a researcher and a witness-participant with his or her accumulated experience, though the historian may not necessarily realise this, as evidenced by the above remark by Tomasz Szarota, who in his account of the specificity of recent history excluded the researcher from the circle of potential witnesses of history.

As a consequence, we cannot speak of transcendence and distance from the subject of the study, and therefore historians’ debate on the history of People’s Republic of Poland (both official and unofficial, unrecorded discussions, comments, etc.), when analysed in greater detail, reveals the significance of personal experience of the past over the his-

¹² E. Domańska, *op. cit.*, p. 58. More on the conflicts between history and memory in K. Pomian, *Historia. Nauka wobec pamięci*, Lublin 2006, pp. 188–198.

¹³ T. Szarota, *Baza źródłowa, wiedza pozaźródłowa i literatura przedmiotu w warsztacie historyka*, „Polska 1944/45–1989. Studia i Materiały”, 6 (2004), p. 7.

toriographical scholarship¹⁴. There is no agreement over the interpretation, and even over the level of reconstructing the course of events, while the witness historians often refer to their own autobiographical memory as the decisive and non-negotiable determinant of the truthfulness of their judgements. Arguments of this type are rare in academic writing and appear much more frequently in spoken statements, formulated in line with the principles of oral culture¹⁵, e.g. in press interviews¹⁶ or public debates¹⁷, as well as in essayistic writing¹⁸, when the convention of the genre imposes a different type of communicative behaviour on a historian. In such cases, one can have the impression that digressive references to personal experience become a substitute for footnotes.

Autobiographical memory is also present and — apparently — particularly useful with regard to the adversaries living later (or elsewhere) who base collective memory on 'classical' source material analysed according to the art of historical discipline. Therefore, we are dealing here with a situation when the historians, being professionally distrustful towards the accounts provided by eyewitnesses, often unwittingly recognise the primacy of their own testimony, which they believe to be

¹⁴ Cf. R. Stobiecki, *Historiografia PRL. Ani dobra, ani mądra, ani piękna... ale skomplikowana. Studia i szkice*, Warszawa 2007.

¹⁵ Cf. W. Ong, *Oralność i piśmienność. Słowo poddane technologii*, translated by J. Japola, Lublin 1992.

¹⁶ Examples of such statements are provided in some interviews with historians published in the bulletin of the Institute of National Remembrance. Cf. "Socjalizmu będziemy bronić jak niepodległości" O propagandzie PRL z Jerzym Eislerem rozmawia Barbara Polak, "Biuletyn IPN", 11 (2001), pp. 4–12; O obszarach wolności w PRL. Z Januszem Kotańskim, Janem Żarynem i Jackiem Teofilem Żurkiem rozmawia Barbara Polak, "Biuletyn IPN", 10 (2002), pp. 4–27; Polski miesiąc grudzień. Z Włodzimierzem Suleją rozmawia Barbara Polak, "Biuletyn IPN", 11–12 (2006), pp. 10–20.

¹⁷ Such as the lecture by Jan Prokop on 'national remembrance and historian's knowledge' ('Pamięć narodowa a wiedza historyka') and the following discussion during the seminar at Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences in Krakow, June 11, 2007, or the discussion between historians in *Czym innym jest pamięć, czym innym historia. Debata „Rzeczypospolitej” — oblicza PRL, „Rzeczypospolita”, Plus-Minus, 26–27. 04. 2008.*

¹⁸ M. Kula, *Wybór tradycji*, Warszawa 2003; A. Paczkowski, *Od sfalszowanego zwycięstwa do prawdziwej klęski. Szkice do portretu*, Kraków 1999.

reliable, over the results of historical studies which are different from their own memory of the past. As a result, it occurs that the historians, similarly to the rest of society, prefer the memory of an eyewitness of the past to knowledge based on scientific research¹⁹, although it refers to the specific situation in which a witness to history and a historian are one.

Split personality

Therefore, a time-witness historian sees history from two different perspectives: from individual, autobiographical memory and historical knowledge. The first perspective means direct involvement, emotional commitment, individual experience, and the message it conveys has the character of a testimony, a personal and subjective account. The latter perspective is based on source materials and critical analysis and is expressed in the form of a conventionalised narrative, compliant with the principles of the scientific discourse, and hence seemingly objective and transcendent with regard to the subject of the research. Time-witness historians practice a peculiar 'dialectic of the past' by combining the art of remembering and ordering the directly experienced reality in line together with the cognitive and interpretative patterns established and applied in the historical profession. They are also convinced that their own memory is more stable and reliable than in the case of other time-witnesses, as they have been taught to distance themselves from the observed events and objectivise that experience by way of placing it in a historical context. Therefore, time-witness historians would consider themselves as those who know better owing to their memories, and who remember better owing to their historical knowledge at hand. This double competence is the grounds on which time-witness historians are considered privileged in cognitive terms. Time-witness historians have wider insight into the subject of the study, since they have a subjective, though not indirectly rendered, and personal memories of the past, verified systematically against the historical knowledge, which makes it a reliable instrument for verifying the sources and academic literature.

The situation of being both a time-witness to historical events and a researcher dealing with remembered past creates inner tensions be-

¹⁹ A. Szpociński, P.T. Kwiatkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

tween the memory of a personal experience and the intellectual predisposition, knowledge and practice as a historian. As a result, I could turn to self-mockery and speak of a time-witness historian's split personality, which would, by analogy to basic psychological definitions, mean the coexistence of two identities that experience and conceptualise the past in different terms. Due to the inability to compromise, the two identities function separately; moreover, they also deny the information of their coexistence. It is not the purpose of my metaphor to underestimate or put to question the legitimacy of historical research of the present. I consider it basically as a starting point for a reflection about the historian's attitude (i.e. mine as well) to the recent, experienced past and about that historian's status as a researcher.

Despite diverse approaches to or opinions about the People's Republic of Poland, time-witness historians constitute a specific liminal 'communitas'. I am referring here to the concept developed by Victor Turner, who drew attention to the role of the liminal phase in the transition ritual. At the time between losing one's old social status and gaining a new one (Turner's 'betwixt and between'), an individual enters the liminal phase, i.e. the temporary exclusion and suspension of rules and standards which apply 'on the outside'. The liminal 'communitas' is the opposite of social order instead of stable continuity; the hierarchy is replaced by equality, while the traditional rules substitute for the potential acceptability of any standard²⁰.

Time-witness historians are stuck in the liminal sphere of the split personality. On the one hand, they cease to question the values of the memory-based sources, and on the other hand, they have exaggerated trust in their personal memories, thus applying the principle of distrust to anyone's memory but their own. The ambivalence of this attitude, mostly ignored by time-witness historians, is nothing unusual, since it results directly from the processual character of the autobiographical memory, integral components of which are the mechanisms of remembering, denial, reinterpretation, through which an individual renders his or her memory to maintain the sense of continuity of the identity and in-

²⁰ V. Turner, *Liminalność i communitas*, in: *Badanie kultury. Elementy teorii antropologicznej. Kontynuacje*, ed. by M. Kempny, E. Nowicka, Warszawa 2004, pp. 240–266; idem, *Frame, Flow and Reflection. Ritual and Drama as Public Liminality*, "Japanese Journal of Religion Studies", 4 (1979), pp. 465–499.

tegrity of the Self²¹. Another reason why historians easily trust the images, feelings, impressions perceived as unchangeable, reliable and non-negotiable, which emerge from autobiographical memory, results from the teleological character of the historical discipline and the convention of the researcher's objectivism and transcendence²². Thus professional historians are usually convinced of being distanced and interpreting the surrounding reality (both past and future) in an accurate way, i.e. with regard to scientific principles. Therefore, time-witness historians consider their memories as a source of knowledge verified according to the rules of the art of studying history, and hence they are reliable.

A symptom of a historian's split personality is confusing not only the cognitive patterns, but also the narrative orders used to speak about the past. Historians and social scientists have a special type of institutional competence that 'provides for the instruments which make it possible to create subjective reality, organise emotional life, order experience into patterns and scenarios'²³. As professional researchers, time-witness historians have the ability to produce texts which are rendered objective by means of using a conventional historiographical narrative with a transparent narrator distanced from the subject of the description even when the narrator is the subject²⁴. Such was the case of Janusz Goćkowski, the author of a work on the everyday life of scholars in the conditions of state socialism. His text was already an object to the anthropological criticism of rendering a personal experience objective²⁵;

²¹ J. Kordys, *Kategorie antropologiczne i tożsamość narracyjna. Szkice z pogranicza neurosemiotyki i historii kultury*, Kraków 2006, p. 200. More on the disfunctions of memory which lead to the disintegration of personality in M. Nałęcka, *Przeklęte błogosławieństwo. Nobilitacja zapomnienia*, "Konteksty. Polska Sztuka Ludowa", vol. 57, 1–2 (2003), pp. 83–87; F.R. Ankersmit, *Wzniosłe odłączenie się od przeszłości lub jak być/stać się tym kim się już nie jest*, translated by J. Benedyktowicz, "Konteksty. Polska Sztuka Ludowa", vol. 57, 3–4 (2003), pp. 25–41.

²² Cf. E. Domańska, op. cit.; W. Wrzosek, *O trzech rodzajach stronniczości historii*, in: *Pamięć i polityka historyczna...*, pp. 77–90.

²³ J. Kordys, op. cit., p. 136.

²⁴ J. Aurell, *Autobiography as unconventional history: constructing the author*, "Rethinking History", vol. 10, 3 (2006), pp. 435–439.

²⁵ Cz. Robotycki, *Pamięć o PRL — antropolog wobec doświadczenia przeszłości własnej kultury*, "Konteksty. Polska Sztuka Ludowa", vol. 57, 3–4 (2003), pp. 66–70.

yet it is worthwhile to have a closer look at it again as an example of one of the strategies applied by a time-witness researcher with regard to the past. Goćkowski's analysis of the game between scholars and the communist authorities bears all the characteristics of an objective research text, typical for its predilection for classifications, comparisons, theoretical frameworks and emotionless description of the past:

*The behaviour of university scholars during state socialism meant engaging in the games for adaptation or the games for identity — taking part in the first did not exclude eo ipso participating in the other. Participants in games of the first type considered them the most important value — settling down in the circles in which they existed and functioned.... As far as participants in the other type of games were concerned, the value they considered essential was to maintain harmony between their professional conduct and the principles and commandments of the ethos of the game for the truth of the research.*²⁶

However, when analysed in greater detail, the text reveals a sphere of autobiographical experience. In the fragment quoted below, the same linguistic convention was used to present the researcher and his inner dilemmas:

*It was not easy for a university scholar to live under real Leninism. Although it is an ecological sphere which offered education by reference to the condition of common ingenuity and resourcefulness, people did not feel like being ingenuous and resourceful. They longed for a world in which money is money, a factory is a factory, a shop is a shop, a bank is a bank, a commodity is a commodity, a service is a service. In the meantime, they were living in a world full of all types of ration coupons, vouchers, wages in kind, material bonuses, etc.*²⁷

This fragment, representative for the entire disquisition, complies with the convention of a scientific text that suggests the author's transcendence towards the object of the description, although in fact we are dealing here with a text which refers to autobiographical memory, as it does not provide any reference to either the source materials or literature on the subject. Czesław Robotycki rightly observed that the alarming

²⁶ J. Goćkowski, *Życie codzienne uczonych w realnym leninizmie*, in: *PRL z pamięci*, ed. by Cz. Robotycki, Kraków 2001, pp. 95–96.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 99.

aspect of the text was the 'false' construction of the narrative, with an invisible and somewhat 'transcendent' narrator/researcher who views and judges the past with a detached eye²⁸. One can therefore have an impression that Goćkowski was not a member of the scientific circle and that he did not participate in the described games with the authorities. Yet the camouflage of scientific objectivism seems to be easily traceable in this autobiographical narrative.

The strategy of translating personal experience into an objective historiographical description is one of the characteristic elements of a split historical personality, when the produced texts are apparently historical and are, in fact, written as a result of the work of memory. Paradoxically, the scientific camouflage, which is relatively easy to unveil, renders the text objectivised as such less reliable, since there emerges a question about the author's motives. Such was the case with Goćkowski's text, which has led me to questions not necessarily intended by the author: what is the purpose behind his peculiar game with memory (or oblivion)? To what extent was he involved in the double game with the communist authorities? To what extent are diagnoses concerning the scholars a diagnosis concerning the author himself?

The transmission between knowledge and memory works in the other direction as well — by way of verifying the knowledge contained in research papers against the personal memories of the experienced past. Such was the status assigned by Tomasz Szarota to his memories; the author used autobiographical memory to challenge the image of the People's Republic of Poland which prevailed in Polish historiography:

Now it makes me wonder whether I, a man whose youth and career date back to the People's Republic of Poland, do not begin to look favourably on those who depict the period of the People's Republic of Poland as not only a time of the secret police, imprisonment, persecution of the soldiers of the Home Army, etc., for a different image of that time has also been kept in my memory [underlined by D.K.]. Meanwhile, I hear statements made in public that all churches were shut in the People's Republic of Poland, and one could pray only at night-time, for it was only then that they were open. Only recently have I read that Christmas trees were available for sale only after

²⁸ Cz. Robotycki, *op.cit.*, p.69.

*Christmas, as a means to celebrate New Year's Day. It is at odds with what I remember [underlined by D.K.], as I cannot recall that I would ever have any problems with buying a Christmas tree before Christmas.*²⁹

I believe that a time-witness historian's sense of dissonance due to the inadequacy of scientific description with personal experience is nothing rare or unusual; anyone who has ever observed a dispute between time witnesses and historians could see it on their own³⁰. As can be concluded from my personal experience and results of participating observation of scientific discussions and conferences, historiographical works leave readers unsatisfied and discomforted due to the discrepancies between historical narrative and the memory of personal experience. Interestingly, the feeling of inadequacy has not raised any questions regarding the theory of historical cognition; instead, accusations have been levelled against a researcher dealing with the past about lacking distance, displaying subjectivity or, on the contrary, lacking any personal experience in 'living in the People's Republic of Poland'. One can only ask why the experience of the inability to faithfully translate the experienced reality into a scientific text has not been reflected upon by historians; why has it not become a starting point for undermining the modernist paradigm?

Integrated personality

How to reconcile one's own entanglement in the past with the requirements of research work? How to distance oneself from one's own memory? How to question a personal experience that constitutes the image of the past? Or the opposite: what to offer in return, when the meaning of objectivism and distance is effectively put to question? In a word, is there a remedy for a witness historian's split personality and what integrated personality means?

²⁹ A statement by T. Szarota, *Czym innym... op. cit.*

³⁰ An opportunity for such observations was provided by the lecture by Jan Prokop on 'national remembrance and historian's knowledge' ('Pamięć narodowa a wiedza historyka') delivered in Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences in Krakow on June 11, 2007. The lecture triggered a stormy discussion about the interpretation of the history of People's Poland and the judgement of the historians' involvement in shaping the memory of that period.

In his analysis of the liminal 'communitas', Victor Turner concluded that some of them have the power to change social order. This is the case when the members of a community consider *communitas* as the value in itself, and instead of aiming at the end of the transition ritual, they decide to remain in the liminal sphere, which then loses the character of a temporary suspension. As a result, an alternative social order is established, and its values and standards spread to the outside and change, or transform, the prevalent system.

An example of such liminal group with the potential prime mover is that of the time-witness historians, or at least those of them who seek new quality in the form of the integrated personality of the two reconciled identities. There may be, and there indeed are, numerous strategies; after all, liminality means experimenting against the tradition, but doing so in the face of lacking any explicit and organised principles of objection. The shared feature of these strategies is the anthropology-related instrument of critical self-reflection about oneself as a subject of research, about the struggle with one's memory, the restrictions due to one's biography, intellectual development, social background, political views, the ways in which to distance oneself from the experienced past, the function attributed to personal memories. Therefore, the crucial point here is a specific form of participating observation, in which the researcher, identical to the object of the research, not only analyses the forms of 'life experience', but also takes into account the effect of social conditions on the final perception of the past. In this way, time-witness historians change their status into that of participant historians, who gain the status of a reliable researchers owing to having determined their limitations. Yet the determinant of this process, shared by all liminal time-witness historians looking for a new status, is to include self-reflection with its particular practical elements in the historical narrative in which they perform the triple role of a researcher, a witness and an author³¹.

One of the significant autobiographical topics included in the narratives of participant historians is the determination of the areas of one's own memory that played an important role in the research work. An example of this approach can be seen in a book by Padraic Kenney

³¹ Por. J. Aurell, *op. cit.*, p. 440.

devoted to the revolutions of 1989 in Central Europe. The author, who had lived in Poland since 1986, offered a testimony to his feelings at that time and their impact on him as a historian:

I would not come much closer to participation that year. Careful to the last, I never asked what my friends were doing, and they never asked me to help. Nevertheless, even I could see their attitude of utter indifference toward the communist regime, and toward ideology. I suppose that feeling has colored my writing [underlined by D.K.] on the Polish People's Republic ever since.³²

The experiences described by Kenney refer to the category of locality, which determines the relation between one's position and the object of research. This is partly a description produced by an ethnographer, a representative of the Western civilization among the Trobriands, who can confront his images and theories with the reality of the People's Republic of Poland, who is not engaged in the activities of the object of the study, but who is a diligent observer and who therefore can verify on his own the personal images and theories about the social relations, the political rules and the relations between the state and its citizens. The comparison to the ethnographer's work seems to be even more legitimate considering the fact that Kenney often uses interviews as a source of information about the events from the period of the collapse of communism.

Andrzej Paczkowski used his autobiography otherwise, namely to explain the point of view adopted with regard to the historiography concerning the People's Republic of Poland, analysed in the quoted text:

As a participant, one finds it difficult to assume the role of a 'pure' observer, even more so that the matter discussed here was (and still has been) strongly conditioned politically... I must also admit that I was its fully intentional participant, not as a party activist or a trade union leader (which was mainly the occupation of medievalists), but as a professional historian: an author (published under a pseudonym), an organiser of gathering and processing documents, a lecturer who popularised knowledge. Therefore, it might be better if this paper was written by someone who waited somewhere on the

³² P. Kenney, *A carnival of revolution — Central Europe 1989*, Princeton 2002, p. 6.

*margin of the dispute for those years to end. Still, who would admit it today?*³³

The reservation expressed above was conveyed in the opening lines of a classically formed scientific text, though this introduction can be treated as a recognition of the polylogic of scientific discourse, 'condemned' to the diversity of perspectives, interpretations and judgements due to the fact that, at that time (in 1992), the whole historical environment was deep-rooted in the studied past.

The third strategy is the autobiography in its genealogical function. Andrzej Friszke used his intellectual autobiography, or actually its excerpt about founding Krystyna Kersten's seminar, to explain his attitude to the People's Republic of Poland, the official historiography at that time and the genesis of his research. An interesting type of narration appears here: the author speaks about the intellectual formation of an entire environment concealed under the enigmatic pronoun 'we':

*We were in opposition to the People's Republic of Poland as a political system and a state subdued by the Soviets. At the same time, we were the citizens of that state, and it was not unimportant to us whether we lived in a Stalinist regime or in a country where certain elements of law and order and some forms of expressing true thoughts are applicable after all. Therefore, neither we nor other citizens of that country felt indifferent about the range of civil liberties, lawfulness, opening or closing of the country to the world, the degree of censorship. The reasoning of the opponents of the People's Republic of Poland was bidirectional — in terms of the principal objectives and values which could be implemented some day, probably not in our lifetime, and the hopes and efforts for an evolution which broadened the scope of liberties and rights within the available framework.*³⁴

Friszke also declared his outlook on the world when writing about the critical approach to the extreme social attitudes he saw at that time, namely the excessively uncompromising attitude and the far-reaching conformism; this opinion sets the prospects for his studies.

³³ A. Paczkowski, *Czarno-białe i biało-czarne, czyli o historii najnowszej historii*, in: idem, *Od sfalszowanego zwycięstwa do prawdziwej klęski. Szkice do portretu*, Kraków 1999, p. 189.

³⁴ A. Friszke, *Przystosowanie i opór. Studia z dziejów PRL*, Warszawa 2007, pp. 5–6.

Regardless of the differences due to the sources of restrictions given by the authors or their choice of the point of view, in all three examples, a reference to autobiographical memory is made only in the opening lines, and it vanishes later, along with the author, who becomes invisible in the narrative. A conclusion can be drawn that the authors, despite their ways of reaching for autobiographical themes, narrow it down to the very specific role of a preventive measure against possible accusations from the circles of historians. Therefore, they remain convinced about the obligation to observe the principles of the art of writing accepted in the scientific environment. When discussing the essence of the matter, i.e. in this case political history, there is no room for personal reflections, references to one's own experience, using memory as a cognitive and interpretative instrument. The historian's identity denies the witness's identity again.

In the end, I would like to refer to a different and inspiring essay by Jacek Chrobaczyński published in the volume *PRL z pamięci* (lit. People's Republic of Poland from memory) referred to above. The author wrote about everyday life in the town of Sanok in the 1960s and 1970s, which he analysed from two perspectives: that of a researcher dealing with recent history and that of a witness to history who had spent the first twenty years of his life in the town. The organising basis of the text is the dialogue, which confronts two diverse though equivalent ways of experiencing the past, two visions of reality, two orders of knowledge, two types of reflection.

Religion and the system from the perspective of a small town. Opposition and hostility? Coexistence? Was it graspable on that socially local level? There is no doubt that, in general terms, the dichotomous image was real and not overdone. Yet the ideological hostility would become 'blurred' if the same people functioned on both sides. ...

It was the millennium and the peregrination of a copy of the miraculous painting of the Blessed Virgin Mary. As far as I remember, we did not hear much about the dispute between the state and the Church over the millennium anniversary of the country's statehood and the adoption of Christianity. A sermon, parochial announcements, classes in religion, occasionally the crackling broadcast of Radio Free Europe and an official newspaper.

Yet we very well remembered the day of the main celebrations of the millennium anniversaries at school, and it was not because of the celebration itself, but because an approval was given to organise an evening party that day, which was not something usual at the time... A dance was announced to start already at 4 pm and to end at 8 pm. The problem was that the millennium mass was scheduled to begin at 6 pm. The result (or what is learnedly called 'the duality of education'): at 4 pm we began the party, at 5.55 pm we all showed up in the parish church, and at 7 pm we were back in school. I do not think that we considered it a battle or a resistant attitude towards the authorities or the system. The two parallel values worked there: the state and the Church.³⁵

The form of a dialogue, a record of the process of negotiations between a historian and his own memory and the description of individual restrictions, which are an integral component of the text, definitely result from adopting the ethnological methods for the purposes of a historical study. The outcome is a hybrid text. On the level of content, instead of an objectivised description in which a recollection would function as a final determination, excluding different interpretations, Chrobaczyński offers a vision of the studied and experienced past that is subjective, and therefore renegotiable and encouraging a different interpretation, and of the research method which the author submits for the readers' evaluation. On the narrative level, the hybrid specificity of the text results from using the collage of easily identifiable genres, namely the historical monograph, memoirs and methodological self-reflection, which coexist and interpenetrate there. At the same time, the text is a study of the process of the historian's 'work on memory', in which the author regains personal integrity and becomes a participant historian owing to the incorporation of a dual perspective, introducing the dialoguing identities of a witness and a historian and a self-reflection about autobiographical memory as a historical source.

Texts of this type are rare in Polish historiography, which may also result from the field of the study. Chrobaczyński's experiment was concerned with the categories of everyday life and microsocial studies which are closer to anthropologists than historians and which can

³⁵ J. Chrobaczyński, *Przyczynek do życia codziennego małego miasta w PRL-u (lata sześćdziesiąte i siedemdziesiąte)*, in: *PRL z pamięci...*, p. 91.

hardly be considered the main, or at least a significant domain in Polish historiography concerning the post-war Poland. Though Chrobaczyński managed to deal with it, the matter of split personality remains a significant though ignored problem of Polish historiography. There still prevails a conviction of the inevitable roles of objectivism and distancing oneself, which can be achieved not only by means of the research methods applied, but above all with the use of formalised narratives. This trend rules out any negotiation between knowledge and memory; the more so that the researcher's identity becomes camouflaged, while the time-witness's identity is excluded as a significant, if not equivalent and cognitively valuable form of studying the past. The postulates put forth by methodologists and certain researchers in favour of a broad critical debate over the predominant paradigms, introducing an interdisciplinary perspective or including new questions and areas (such as memory) in the study on recent history have remained largely unanswered. Yet if these issues are not addressed, further deterioration will be observable in the condition of the split personality of time-witness historians, who reduce their research potential, avoid revealing the double role of the witness historian and coming to terms with it, bearing in mind their affiliation to the contemporary generation, withdraw from a discussion on the subject of autobiographical memory and the new phenomenon of post-memory and thus sentence themselves to becoming marginalised, if not excluded, from the continuous dispute over the People's Republic of Poland, which in fact is a dispute over memory.

Tożsamość podzielona. Rola pamięci autobiograficznej w badaniach historii najnowszej

Historycy zajmujący się dziejami najnowszymi znajdują się w podwójnej sytuacji poznawczej wobec rzeczywistości historycznej: wiedzy naukowej badacza i doświadczenia naocznego świadka przeszłości. Pojawia się zatem pytanie o rolę, jaką pełni druga z perspektyw w dyskursie historiograficznym, gdy doświadczenie świadka pozostaje w konflikcie z naukową interpretacją doświadczonej rzeczywistości historycznej oraz o konsekwencje prymarności doświadczenia w stosunku do wiedzy. Artykuł analizuje charakter, korzyści i bariery związane z podwójnym oglądem przeszłości. Druga część stanowi interpretację wy-

branych tekstów historiograficznych autorstwa historyków-świadków, prezentujących odmienne rozwiązania narracyjne ukrywania/ujawiania ni swojego podwójnego statusu.

Geteilte Identität. Rolle des autobiografischen Gedächtnisses in den Forschungen neuester Geschichte

Die Historiker, die sich mit der neuen Geschichte beschäftigen, befinden sich in einer doppelten Erkenntnissituation der historischen Wirklichkeit. Einerseits werden sie mit dem Wissen des Forschers konfrontiert, andererseits stehen sie den Erfahrungen des Augenzeugen der Vergangenheit gegenüber. Somit ergeben sich die folgenden Fragen: Welche Rolle in dem historiografischen Diskurs erfüllt die zweite Perspektive, wenn die Erfahrung des Zeugen in Konflikt mit der wissenschaftlichen Interpretation der erfahrenen historischen Wirklichkeit steht? Und was für Folgen hat der Vorrang der Erfahrung vor dem Wissen? In dem Beitrag werden der Charakter, die Nutzen und die Einschränkungen analysiert, die mit der Doppelinterpretation der Geschichte verbunden sind. Im zweiten Teil des Artikels werden ausgewählte historiografische Texte Historiker-Zeugen interpretiert, die sich unterschiedlicher Narrationsstrategien-Verbergens bzw. Bekanntgebens ihres Doppelstatus — bedient haben.

Ewelina Szpak

Polish historians on the road to the history of mentality

*Historians are more like pilgrims wandering around lost in a network of intersecting paths, constantly asking for the way and usually receiving confusing information, while the target towards which they are heading has an ambiguous outline, dispersing and vanishing as the moving skyline.*¹

That is how, in 1994, Jerzy Topolski described in a weekly, *Polityka*, the historians' struggle with the postmodernist thought developing in their environment.

These words very aptly define historians studying mentality, paradoxically combining the rebirth of their area of study with the postmodernist defiance of the former historical thought and narration. Let me use these words as a central theme of the present article.

Yet it is not my intention to provide a systematised analyse of Polish scholarship in the history of mentality. I shall concentrate on the following three issues of key importance from the point of view of a historian involved in studying mentality:

1. terminological unspecificity and its consequent openness
2. heterogeneity of sources and research methods and, consequently,
3. the matter of the postulated interdisciplinarity of studies.

The starting point for the statement quoted above is the context for Polish research on mentality and, importantly enough, I have based my conclusions mainly on that context. Still, it is difficult to discuss the situation in Poland without reference to the Western-European tradition, since the problem of studying the history of mentality was under-

¹ J. Topolski, *Wielka masakra kotów*, "Polityka" 1994, nr 16, p. 25.

taken there much earlier and to a much wider extent as early as in the 1960s². As long as the earliest attempts at studying the history of mentality in Poland date back to the 1970s, in France (where the history of mentality came into being), or in England and the USA (where it soon came through), one could observe a methodological discussion which was severely critical towards the history of mentality at that time. Actual interest in mentality arose in Poland only in the early 1990s. This was partly the result of the reopening towards Western-European research trends and currents after 45 years of isolation during socialism. To a certain extent this interest in mentality was also a consequence of what was published at the end of the 1980s, often much delayed with regard to the originals, of Polish translations of the works of leading classics in studying the 'mentalité' (such as Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, Carlo Ginzburg, Philippe Ariès, Aron Guriewicz, Norbert Elias and others)³. Although in the 1990s the main French 'mentalists', i.e. Jacques

² The earliest interest in mentality dates back to the 1920s. The first researcher to use the concept of mentality was Levy-Bruhl (*mentalite primitive*); later on, the interest in collective mentality was realized by Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, and continued by Fernand Braudel and the historians from the *Annales*. A turning point, or a 'shift' in the study of mentality, as Peter Burke would rather call it, was the period of the 1960s and the activity of such historians as Philippe Ariès, Jacques Le Goff, Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes etc., see e.g. E. Domańska, *Montaillou — Arkadia „heretyckiego” historyka* in: *Historia, mity, interpretacje*, ed. by A. Barszczewska-Krupa, Łódź 1996, pp. 96–97, Burke P., *The French Historical Revolution. The Annales School 1929–1989*, Polity Press 1991, P. Burke, *What is Cultural History?*, Polity Press 2004, P. Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History*, Polity Press 2003, P.H. Hutton, *Philippe Ariès and the politics of French cultural history*, London 2004, P.H. Hutton, *The history of mentalities. The new map of cultural history*, "History and Theory", vol. 20, (1981), pp. 237–259, R.E.G. Lloyd, *Demystifying mentalities*, Cambridge University Press 1990, G.G. Iggers, *From Macro- to Microhistory: The History of Everyday Life*, in: *Historiography in the 20 century. Postmodern Challenge with a new epilogue*, Wesleyan 1997, pp. 101–116, T. Wiślicz, *Krótkie trwanie. Problemy historiografii francuskiej lat dziewięćdziesiątych XX wieku*, Warszawa 2004, E. Domańska, *Historia antropologiczna. Mikrohistoria*, in: N. Zemon Davis, *Powrót Martina Guerre'a*, Poznań 2011 (Posłowie), pp. 195–234.

³ E. Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou: wioska heretyków 1294–1324*, Warszawa 1988; C. Ginzburg, *Ser i robaki: wizja świata pewnego młynarza z XVI w.*, Warszawa 1989; P. Ariès, *Człowiek i śmierć*, Warszawa 1992; idem, *Historia*

Le Goff or Georges Duby, claimed explicitly that "... the term 'mentality' is not particularly accurate [and] we do not find it satisfactory any longer. Indeed, what does 'mentality' mean? ... it is but a background, a framework for the clear thought ..."⁴, thus aiming their research interests towards an easier definable history of ideas and/or representations — at that time the study of mentality was becoming increasingly popular on the grounds of Polish historiography. Its adherents were mainly mediaevalists and researchers concerned with the early modern era and the 19th century⁵. In their studies they followed the patterns, in

dzieciństwa: dziecko i rodzina w dawnych czasach, Gdańsk 1995; J. Delumeau, *Strach w kulturze Zachodu*, Warszawa 1986; G. Duby, *Bitwa pod Bouvines, niedziela 27 lipca 1214*, Warszawa 1988; N. Elias, *Przemian obyczajów w cywilizacji Zachodu*, Warszawa 1980; A. Guriewicz, *Problemy średniowiecznej kultury ludowej*, Warszawa 1987; Vigarello G. *Czystość i brud. Higiena ciała od średniowiecza do XX wieku*, Warszawa 1996.

⁴ G. Duby, B. Geremek, *Wspólne pasje*, interview by Philippe Sainteny, Warszawa 1995, p. 55.

⁵ Among the multiple examples of Polish (practical) studies of mentality, those which are worth mentioning here include the following: B. Geremek, *Ludzie marginesu w średniowiecznym Paryżu XIV–XV wiek*, Wrocław 1971; idem, *La potence ou la pitié: l'Europe et les pauvres, du Moyen âge à nos jours*, Paris 1987 [Polish edition: *Litość i szubienica. Dzieje nędzy i miłosierdzia*, Warszawa 1989]; M. Bogucka, *Wkręgu mentalności mieszczaństwa gdańskiego w XVII wieku. Notatnik Michała Hancke*, "Ars historica. Prace z dziejów powszechnych i Polski", Poznań 1976, pp. 617–633; *Biedni i bogaci. Studia z dziejów społeczeństwa i kultury ofiarowane B. Geremkowi w 60 rocznicę urodzin*, ed. by M. Aymard [et al.], Warszawa 1992; U. Świdarska-Włodarczyk, *Mentalność szlachty polskiej XV i XVI wieku*, Poznań 2003; P. Kowalski, *Theatrum wszystkiego i poćciwy gospodarz. O wizji świata pewnego siedemnastowiecznego pisarza ziemiańskiego*, Kraków 2000; M. Senkowska-Gluck, *Życie po Rewolucji. Przemiany mentalności i obyczaju w napoleońskiej Francji*, Warszawa–Wrocław–Kraków, 1994; B. Baczek, *Człowiek i światopogląd*, Warszawa 1965; H. Madurowicz-Urbańska, *Mentalność chłopów polskich w XVIII wieku (w świetle suplik wsi królewskich i kościelnych)*, "Sobótka" vol. 37, 3/4 (1982), pp. 259–269; J. Ronikier, *Hetman Adam Sieniawski i jego regimenterze. Studium z mentalności szlachty polskiej 1706–1725*, Kraków 1992; *Studia z dziejów kultury i mentalności czasów nowożytnych*, ed. by K. Matwijowski, B. Rok, Wrocław 1993; M. Bogucka, *Historia gospodarcza a historia mentalności: jeden czy dwa kierunki historiografii*, in: *Między historią a teorią: refleksje nad problematyką dziejów i wiedzy historycznej*, red. M. Drozdowski, Poznań–Warszawa 1988, pp. 442–446.

many respects, of their French colleagues, and yet they devoted little attention to complex terminological and methodological problems, thus approaching the concept of mentality as understandable in itself.

Yet, as evidenced in discussions between the theorists and methodologists of history, conceptualising mentality is not that simple. Although, according to Michel Vovelle, precise specification of the term 'mentalité' (if not using it at all) is not crucial⁶, every researcher should make an attempt to undertake the challenge out of pure professional honesty, or diligence. This, however, is not an easy task, considering the fact that 'mentality' has been "an open term ever since it was coined — flexible and extensive on the one hand and vague on the other — and stemming from various traditions and inspirations"⁷. Jacques Le Goff wrote in the 1970s:

*the attractive thing about the history of mentality is its vagueness, the determination to reveal this 'deposit' of historical analysis, the peculiar 'not knowing what'*⁸.

Therefore, the starting point is the necessity of grasping the terminological ways and paths plotted by the hitherto studies and making a decision about the choice of one's own direction. Yet the definition, probably redundant for the study itself, does in fact determine the choice of applied methods and, above all, the research questions to be asked.

'Mentality' — a problematic term

Mentality was interpreted in different ways by the very founders of 'anthropological history' and history of mentalité. Starting from Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, Norbert Elias, Philippe Ariès, Jacques Le Goff and others, mentality was referred to a range of spheres and areas of life of the studied social groups analysed from different methodological perspective, depending on the author's research interests; for instance, for some of the historians (such as Marc Bloch, Keith Thomas) the sphere of a particular manifestation of mentality were magic, customs and rites. Others saw mentality as the sphere of collective psychology, expressed

⁶ M. Vovelle, *Ideologies and Mentalities*, Blackwell 1990, p. 5.

⁷ W. Wrzosek, *Historia, kultura, metafora: powstanie nieklasycznej historiografii*, Wrocław 1995, p. 134.

⁸ J. Le Goff, *Les Mentalités: une histoire ambiguë*, in: *Faire de l'histoire*, ed. by J. Le Goff, P. Nora, vol. 3, Paris 1974, p. 86, quoted in: *ibidem*, p. 134.

mainly through feelings and emotions (Lucien Febvre), while still others considered mentality as embedded in a system of values, folklore and religiousness (Jacques Le Goff)⁹.

Different concepts of mentality can also be found in Polish studies, e.g. in some of them mentality is referred to as a sphere of attitudes and values, the mind, or ideology¹⁰. There are also cases where the frames of mentality are expanded to the extent in which it is equated with culture, if not civilisation¹¹.

Different starting points, along with different research interests — similarly to 'the fathers of mentality' — often determine the way mentality is defined. The researchers, inspired by 'anthropological history' and sensitive to theoretical and terminological reflection, usually refer to the shared and probably most widely accepted definition of mentality as proposed by Georges Duby, for whom mentality is:

*a system of images, ideas, unformulated judgements, ordered differently in different social classes as the systems in motion and therefore historical, but which do not always move in the same rhythm at the different levels of culture, and which determine human behaviour and conduct without their being aware of it. It is therefore something ungraspable, fluid*¹².

Yet it may also be the case that one's manner, perceived by the above-mentioned G. Duby as one of the effects of a specific mentality, is defined by researchers as mentality itself. On the Polish grounds of these studies an example of such a researcher is Zenon Sikiewicz, who sees mentality as "a specific lifestyle, expressed in the complex of general

⁹ See J. Ronikier, *Historia mentalności a metodologia nauk historycznych*, „Historyka”, 26 (1996), p. 56.

¹⁰ Polish researchers of Russian culture very often use the term 'mentality' interchangeably with the concept of 'Russian soul'; see e.g. M. Broda, *Mentalność, tradycja i bolszewicko-komunistyczne doświadczenie Rosji*, Łódź 2007.

¹¹ See F. Braudel, *Gramatyka cywilizacji*, Warszawa 2006, pp. 55–56, A. Kalczyńska, *Mentalność jako bariera rozwoju społeczeństwa cywilizacyjnego*, 'Gazeta It' (2004), 4.

¹² G. Duby, B. Geremek, *Wspólne pasje*, op. cit.

social, socioeconomic, ethical stereotypes and, indirectly, in evaluative motives and orientations”¹³.

In studies (not only historical) of everyday life mentality is also identified as a lifestyle. Although for most of them mentality is but one of the aspects of their analyses¹⁴, there are also scholars considering it as an inherent part of the final effect. In the latter case mentality emerges above the description of a specific, historical reality and manifests itself in diverse ways of comprehending and describing oneself and the surrounding reality by its actors and creators¹⁵.

As part of the studies of everyday life, mentality also tends to be identified with the ‘innate yet unintentional’ and ‘pre-rational’¹⁶ knowledge which determines the form of one’s everyday life and which may go along well with the mental background, as described by Maria Solarska and formulated on the basis of Foucauldian ‘knowledge-truth-power’ triad¹⁷. This mental background, though conceptually tied to the idea of ‘mental equipment’, as proposed by L. Febvre, was defined differently by Solarska as “a system of discourse practices regulating people’s actions and thoughts”. It refers the researcher to another extremely vast area (and methods) of research, i.e. discursive rules and practice, abbreviated into discourse for the sake of simplification, which determine and have an effect on the way of thinking, speaking, understanding and, therefore, also experiencing and acting in the surrounding reality.

Leaving aside psychological definitions of mentality, usually referred to the way of thinking, system of orientations, and the set of rules de-

¹³ Z. Sikiewicz, *Mentalność radziecka w świadomości masowej Rosjan*, paper on the 9th Polish Congress of Sociology, 1994, quoted in: G. Krzymińska, *Mentalność ekonomiczna mieszkańców wsi: studium na przykładzie wybranych kategorii społecznych*, Poznań 2000, p. 21.

¹⁴ See in particular M. Bogucka, *Życie codzienne — spory wokół profilu badań i definicji*, „Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej” vol. 44, 3 (1996) pp. 247–253; T. Szarota, *Życie codzienne w Peerelu — propozycja badawcza*, „Polska 1944/45–1989. Studia i materiały”, 1 (1995), pp. 201–215.

¹⁵ E. Szpak, „*Gra pojęć*” a obrazy całości, czyli o konceptualizacji faktu historycznego. „*Robotnik rolny*” i „*życie codzienne*” pracowników PGR, in: „*Historyka*”, 25 (2005), pp. 119–134.

¹⁶ J. Mucha, *Codziennosc i odświętnosc: Polonia w South Bend*, Warszawa 1996, p. 39.

¹⁷ M. Solarska, *Michel Foucault jako historyk*, „*Historyka*”, 33 (2001), p. 26.

termining perception of the surrounding world, it can be observed that, despite the whole variety of associations and connotations implied by the term 'mentality', it generally guides the researcher towards a widely understood 'mental reality' which leaves a considerable field for free interpretation and provides the researcher with a vast space to freely approach the subject in conceptual terms.

It is also due to the semantic capacity of 'mentality' that certain scholars studying the concept try to avoid the problem by not defining the term at all, and by describing it in their narratives by means of the key concepts that touch upon or merge with the area of the widely understood 'mental reality'. Others come down merely to the colloquial or dictionary meaning of mentality, or *a priori* narrow down the term by supplementing it with an attributive expression. Such was the case with Grażyna Krzyminiewska, who studied the economic mentality of selected groups of the rural community and who implemented sociological concept of mentality defined as the "people's way of thinking about and referring to the economic reality"¹⁸. Although it could be assumed that this solution and the peculiar fragmentation of social reality is a limitation imposed beforehand, it undoubtedly safeguards the researcher by enabling a clear-cut definition of the objectives and fields of the study.

Interdisciplinarity

The assumption of crucial significance for the study of mentality is the demand for interdisciplinarity, put forth in the area of "'anthropological history'" in which interdisciplinarity would "allow and adapt different, often extreme research methods and theoretical inspirations"¹⁹. This concept is meant here as the cooperation and mutual theoretical and methodological inspiration of a number of disciplines and sub-disciplines targeted at understanding (and explaining, though obviously to a lesser extent) social worlds and outlooks, which opens the historian up to such disciplines, emerging with increasing impact and distinction on the horizon of the study of mentality, as psychology, linguistics, media studies, emotionology, etc.²⁰. Historians entering the area of studies on mental-

¹⁸ G. Krzyminiewska, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

¹⁹ W. Wrzosek, *op. cit.*, pp. 127–128.

²⁰ See: J. Anusiewicz, *Lingwistyka kulturowa. Zarys problematyki*, Wrocław 1994.

ity would clearly see that this interdisciplinarity and openness, “probably tempting with an intellectual experience”, is also a major and real source of the risk of getting lost in a maze of theoretical ways and paths as mentioned above in the quote by Topolski.

How far can historians of mentality go in their research and inspirations to avoid being suspected of ‘heresy’ or ‘non-historicity’? Does it suffice to remain faithful to historical thought, as represented in a sensitivity to the changeability and dynamism of time, the historical (socio-cultural) context of the period, and not to wander off onto any of the paths of the inspiring discipline?

Obviously crucial, though still seemingly insufficient, support for the historian of mentality in answering these questions is the outcome of the theoretical and methodological debate concerning postmodernist historical thought, which appeared in the 1990s in *Historyka* and in a precious few other publications²¹. Works by such historians and methodologists as Ewa Domańska, Wojciech Wrzosek, Jerzy Topolski or Alina Barszczewska-Krupa, Czesław Robotycki, which referred to the latest Western-European achievements in the history of mentality at that time, provided irreplaceable assistance in Polish studies of mentality. Having given considerable space to the latest research concepts and theories in a number of social disciplines (such as anthropology, literature studies, linguistics, film and media studies, etc.), these works were highly inspiring to contemporary researchers. The articles by Polish theorists and methodologists often clearly distinguished between a historical and an anthropological approach to the studies.

Indeed, it may be dangerous for historians to accept uncritically the structural perspective in ethnological or anthropological research (an exceptionally important one in the study of mentality), as it implies the risk of “immobilizing”, making a static and uniform (simplifying) mentality of the analyzed community. Presenting the specificity of a studied group and its internal diversity, along with putting a strong emphasis on a wider social context, changes in time and space, is an enormous

²¹ E. Domańska, *Montaillou... eadem, Mikrohistorie: spotkania w międzyświatach*, Poznań 1999; W. Wrzosek, *op. cit.*; *Dokąd zmierza współczesna humanistyka*, ed. by T. Kostyrko, Warszawa 1994; *W poszukiwaniu antropologicznego wymiaru historii: Aron Guriewicz, Carlo Ginzburg*, ed. by J. Pomorski, „Res Historyka” 2 (1998).

challenge for the researcher of mentality. Difficulties in overcoming the above-mentioned problems were also pointed out by Peter Burke in *History and Social Theory*. Next to the obstacles given above, he also drew attention to yet another aspect, often ignored by the anthropology-inspired researchers:

*a still more serious problem arises from the fact that historians of mentalities easily slip into assuming the existence of a binary opposition between two belief system, the 'traditional' and the 'modern' (...) also the contrast between Them and Us reduces the variety of the 'other' to uniformity*²².

Therefore, the descriptive categories often adopted by anthropologists immersed in the temporal 'here and now' need not easily or directly be translatable into the past, historical reality. Inspiration from the anthropological methods may also imply another risk, the one I also encountered when studying rural communities.

This risk was very meaningfully described by Piotr Kowalski, in my opinion one of the most eminent Polish anthropologists:

*Good material for presenting epistemological limitations in attempts at reconstructing mentality is provided when reflecting upon 'ludoznawstwo' [folklore studies], the study of rural communities: ethnographers have long been referring readily to the folk view of the world. Yet the 'anthropocosm of folk culture' as a cognitive construct is more sensible than the culture of the described community. Obviously, never has there existed a world as it emerges from such descriptions. However, there is no other way: to go beyond ... cultural 'stocktaking' and have the urge to reach an understanding, the meanings, one cannot avoid using similar constructs. The result of works by Polish researchers is the image of a rural culture in Poland in the 19th century which can be charted like a periodic table of elements, while there is no doubt that this folk culture never existed in such a systemic form; it is an ordering construct which does not correspond to the historical reality.*²³

In other words, the so-called traditional village/folk culture as described by ethnographers and anthropologists is but a scientific construct which helps us attach meaning to and understand the symbols and meanings

²² P. Burke, *History and Social Theory*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York 1992, p. 94.

²³ P. Kowalski, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

of folk culture. It is more of an interpretation than a reflection of the past social reality. It also makes the historian of mentality face the crucial question about the purpose and limits of anthropological inspiration. The table of elements, mentioned by Kowalski as a base for reconstructions which "lead dangerously to the creation of images of order contradictory to movement"²⁴, obviously should not be used by a historian as the only and definite set used in interpreting cultural codes and meanings. Although the interpretations of cultural codes and symbols worked out throughout years of studies are greatly inspiring for historians, i.e. by opening them up to wider possibilities of perceiving and interpreting social reality, they should be approached with caution and reserve, depending on the specificity of the analysed period, space, or social group²⁵.

The problem described here is also linked, to some extent, to the issue of the methods of using sources in studying mentality. Despite the popular belief among researchers that "the sources for studying the history of mentality can be found in every object and document"²⁶, this belief is always followed by an additional condition that using such comprehensive sources requires "approaching them with a specified questionnaire". When formulating questions about the 'mental reality' reflected in the sources, it is helpful to refer to the above disciplines that deal with the internal mechanisms of all cultures (and anthropology and ethnology in particular, as is the case here) and with the unfulfilled collective phenomenon. In 1981 Natalie Zemon Davis, an excellent historian observed the following:

We consult anthropological writings not for prescriptions, but for suggestions; not for universal rules of human behavior, but for relevant comparisons. There is no substitute for extensive work in the historical sources. There is no way that a ritual in New Guinea or Zambia can be used to establish the meaning and uses of a ritual, say, in

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁵ See also: P. Kowalski, *Leksykon: znaki świata, omen, przesąd, znaczenie*, Warszawa 1998; L. Stomma, *Antropologia wsi polskiej w XIX wieku*, Warszawa 1983; W. Pawluczuk, *Świat w kulturach tradycyjnych*, „Literatura Ludowa”, vol. 29, 3/4, (1985), pp. 3–11.

²⁶ J. Ronikier, *op. cit.*, p. 57; G. Duby, B. Geremek, *op. cit.*

sixteenth-century Europe; the evidence must come from the people and the institutions of the time ²⁷.

Therefore, according to this historian, the methods and techniques of anthropology cannot be easily implemented in history of mentality. This conviction is in accordance with that of Ewa Domańska, who claimed that the difference between studies by anthropologists and those by historians is that the former can verify their hypotheses systematically by contacting the live material; they have 'source of experiences' of a synthetic character at their disposal, as they can use their senses, see, hear, smell, try to feel what they are studying. Therefore, they are always in the situation of 'being here', 'face to face', with the studied natives and their culture. Historians do not have this opportunity²⁸. This situation definitely applies to historians of antiquity, mediaevalists or a 19th-c. historians, yet it is worth a thought to see whether, and to what extent, the same applies to researchers dealing with the the history of the 20th century (and in particular the period from the 1950s onwards). It seems that the possibility of having direct contact with the 'time-witnesses' of the analysed period and the methods of oral history, makes historians closer to the position of the anthropologists than, say, mediaevalists. Still, historians must take into account the distance through time. However, based on stories and the still vivid memory of the participants or observers of the described social groups, historians have the opportunity to have deeper insight into the described problems.

However, the temporal closeness of 20th-c. historians of mentality implies other problems, which are not so troublesome to researchers dealing with earlier periods. One such problem is the necessity of historians' distance to the analysed sources and traces of the recent past, what is extremely different to learn or master, often difficult to achieve in terms of not having a more or less fulfilled emotional attitude. In the case of studying mentality, analysing sources is not identical to the analysis that is applied in the traditional 'positivist' historical research, and this does not just concern the careful reading and analysing of usually written sources anymore. Fascinated with the early-modern times,

²⁷ N.Z. Davis, *The possibilities of the past*, „Journal of Interdisciplinary History”, vol. 12, 2 (1981), p. 273.

²⁸ E. Domańska, *Mikrohistorie...*, p. 73.

Piotr Kowalski wrote very aptly about the method of reading mentality-related sources — for him the content in the sources is:

*not contained in the direct, explicit statements, but on the level of the 'obvious'. ... a researcher cannot trust what a source is talking about; he should go into the world of 'implied information' and reach the outlook on the world which underlies that source 'above' the text itself*²⁹.

This way of reading sources requires that the researcher maintain an enormous distance and remain 'outside' of the described 'mental reality', which is extremely difficult in the case of studying the 20th century. The problem of this 'distance' was described even more bluntly by one of the most eminent historians of mentality, Carlo Ginzburg, who said: "one cannot go beyond one's culture, unless at the cost of madness"³⁰.

The anxiety expressed by Ginzburg may explain the reasons why the predominant fields of interest for the historians of mentality are earlier periods, such as the 16th or 18th centuries. Does this mean that researchers dealing with the 20th century, who have no influence whatsoever on their cultural immersion, is foredoomed to limitations, if not failure, in their pursuit to study mentality? I believe, though definitely not without a bias, that the decider here is the context, i.e. the object and the subject of the study. Polish scholarship in the area of contemporary history with regard to systems of values, attitudes, everyday life, mentality and privacy in the period of the People's Republic of Poland by such researchers as Dariusz Jarosz, Tomasz Szarota, or the authors of the series *W krainie PRL* ('In the Land of the People's Republic of Poland')³¹ seem to contradict the above question. Although studies of this type do challenge researchers, forcing them to develop a considerable sense of self-awareness and self-control, their successful outcome is possible also thanks to the fact that the analysed period is a finished era. Michel Foucault would probably call that period a specific discursive formation, governed by its characteristic rules and practices of discourse. The peculiar splits within the formations understood as such,

²⁹ P. Kowalski, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

³⁰ C. Ginzburg, *Ser i robaki: wizja świata pewnego młynarza z XVI w.*, Warszawa 1989, p. 17, quoted in J. Ronikier, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

³¹ See D. Kałwa, *Na peryferiach peryferii? Codziennosc PRL w polskiej historiografii*, „Roczniki Antropologii Historii” vol. 2, 1 (2012), pp. 175–193.

along with the shifts within the practical area which have emerged successively since 1989, may render this period perceivable as a distinct system of symbols and meanings in a number of aspects. This distinction, in turn, enables researchers to detach themselves from the ways of thinking which were predominant within a given formation ('the era of the People's Republic of Poland')³².

Thus we move gradually from the problem of terminological chaos, through the more complex problem of sources and that of research methods and techniques, a fundamental issue for mentality studies, to the extremely important question of the researchers themselves.

This unprecedentedly extensive turn towards the person of the researcher, or the author, forced historians to expand the horizon their own self-awareness in their research, results to a great extent from the discussions held among historians in the 1970s. Their consequence was disputing the concept of objectivism and historical truth. Preceded by the 'linguistic turn' (in the 1960s) and the eruption of works dealing with discourse and historical narrative (Roland Barthes, Haden White), these discussions had a considerable impact on studies of mentality. Their particularly important effect was an innovative approach to capturing and presenting research results, as exemplified in publications by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, Natalie Zemon Davis, or Carlo Ginzburg, which were exceptional for their novel-like narration (abounding with literary figures of speech, metaphors, dialogues, etc.) and lack of objectivity, declared openly by the authors³³.

Although these publications were enthusiastically welcomed by readers in Poland, their Polish counterparts have not been written. This was partly due to the occasional accusations of non-historicity, and partly because postmodernist ideas did not have numerous adherents in the environment of Polish historians. The strong attachment of historians to traditional research methods resulted in their unwillingness to undertake the risk of a more innovative (literary) presentation of their research results. This issue was also mentioned to some extent

³² On specific discursive formation see: E. Szpak, *op. cit.*.

³³ On critical reception of anthropological history see: D.A. Sikorski, *Jak historyk potyka się o antropologię historyczną. Na marginesie książki Karoliny Polasik "Antropologiczny rekonesans historyka. Szkice o antropologii historycznej"*, "Kwartalnik Historyczny", vol. 118, 1 (2011), pp. 485–510.

by J. Ronikier, who wrote in 1995, with reference to mentality studies, that “what is particularly dubious is the largely speculative character of providing evidence, missing the possibility to verify the results empirically”³⁴. Therefore, the history of mentality, close in its medium to literature, was not accepted positively in the circle of historical practitioners. Obviously, history methodologists and theorists approached it with more understanding, to mention only Ewa Domańska, who wrote:

*Since the purpose behind studying the past is to understand it, this purpose can be met by both literature and history; with its appeal to imagination and emotions, literature can reach further into the essence of reality than history, limited by rational analysis*³⁵.

Yet the question about how to write about mentality in this situation remains open. How does one reconcile history as a discipline (with its scientific analytical methods) with history as the art of literature (with its literary form of presentation)?

Obviously the necessary precondition to meet this task is the researcher’s courage as well as joy and skill in asking questions, searching, experimenting and wandering around in Topolski’s ‘network of intersecting paths’, each of them containing valuable hints for the definition, the methods, the sources and the ways of presenting the research.

However, regardless of which paths are selected by a historians of mentality to follow, the important thing is for that historians to always head towards their clearly defined object of study. Although, in Topolski’s words, that objective can be as ungraspable as ‘the moving skyline’, the path to that objective will surely be filled with amazing encounters, adventures and traps, which make it worth following even more...

Polscy historycy na drodze do historii mentalności

Artykuł jest próbą wskazania na trzy, w moim przekonaniu najważniejsze problemy, z jakimi zmierzyć się musi historyk mentalności. Pierwszym z nich jest terminologiczna niedookreśloność i „otwartość” pojęcia mentalności, kolejnym — wielość źródeł i sposobów ich wykorzystywania, ostatnim zaś — interdyscyplinarność badań. Niezależnie od przyjętej przez historyka perspektywy i sposobu rozumienia, a więc i definio-

³⁴ J. Ronikier, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

³⁵ E. Domańska, *Montaillou...*, p. 101.

wania przedmiotu badań, „mentalność” zawsze odsyłać go będzie do „rzeczywistości myślowej”, która daje ogromne możliwości samodzielnej konceptualizacji badań. Różnorodność źródeł i pytań badawczych wymagać będzie jednak poszukiwania nowych, interdyscyplinarnych metod ich analizy. Jak daleko w swych poszukiwaniach i inspiracjach badawczych posunąć się może historyk mentalności, by nie zostać posądzonym o „herezję”? Czy wierność historycznemu myśleniu objawiającemu się we wrażliwości na zmianę oraz historyczny kontekst epoki są wystarczające, by nie zbłądzić? To główne pytania, na które staram się odpowiedzieć w tekście. Punktem wyjścia dla stawianych w nim problemów badawczych jest kontekst polskich badań nad mentalnością, nie pozbawiony jednak odniesień do analogicznych badań, podejmowanych na gruncie historiografii zachodnioeuropejskiej.

Polnische Historiker auf dem Weg zur Mentalitätsgeschichte

Dieser Beitrag ist ein Versuch, auf drei — meines Erachtens — wichtigste Probleme hinzuweisen, denen ein Mentalitätshistoriker gegenübergestellt wird. Das erste Problem ist die terminologische Unbestimmtheit und die „Offenheit” des Begriffs der Mentalität. Das weitere ist die Vielfalt der Quellen und ihrer Nutzungsweisen. Das letzte Problem dagegen bildet die Interdisziplinarität der Forschungen. Unabhängig von der von dem Historiker angenommenen Perspektive und seiner Verstandeskraft, also auch nicht von der Definierung des Forschungsgegenstandes bedingt, wird er immer von der „Mentalität” zur „Denkrealität” weitergeleitet, die eine Vielfalt der Möglichkeiten zur selbständigen Forschungskonzeptualisierung bietet. Die Verschiedenheit der Quellen und Forschungsfragen verlangt jedoch die Suche nach den neuen interdisziplinären Analysemethoden. Wie weit kann ein Mentalitätshistoriker in seiner Forschungssuche und seinen Forschungsinspirationen gehen, um keiner Häresie beschuldigt zu werden? Sind die Treue dem historischen Denken, das sich in der Empfindlichkeit für das Neue äußert, und der historische Zusammenhang der Epoche genug, um sich nicht zu irren? In diesem Beitrag wird versucht, diesen Fragen nachzugehen. Den Ausgangspunkt für die Forschungsprobleme bilden polnische Mentalitätsforschungen im Zusammenhang mit den historiografischen westeuropäischen Studien.

Barbara Klich-Kluczevska

Taboo as a useful category of historical analysis¹

At the dawn of the new millennium, a German professor of Slavic studies carried out a survey among Poles on the presence of taboos in Polish culture. Respondents puzzled over questions relating to what they were not allowed to say, what was not spoken of, what taboo was and who or what supervised its observance.² The study revealed that, according to one quarter of Poles, you could speak of everything in contemporary Poland, and there were only two topics here which were clearly taboo. Almost half of the respondents indicated sex as the most important taboo in the Polish culture³. Survey results also indicated that “speaking negatively about the Church” is a “collectively anchored and sanctioned” taboo in Poland. Other taboo topics are much less present. Respondents only marginally indicated violence, abortion, homosexuality, Jewish-related topics and anti-Semitism, death, love, drugs, disease, politics, euthanasia, incest, pornography, corruption, contraception or xenophobia were only marginally pointed out by the respondents. According to the study results, the community (public opinion, social norms) and the Church (clergy, Catholicism, pope, religion) perform the supervision over the observance of the taboo⁴.

¹ Badania przeprowadzone w ramach projektu finansowanego przez Narodowe Centrum Nauki (N N108 252135).

² M. Fleischer, *Obszar tabu w systemie polskiej kultury*, „Rocznik Centrum Studiów Niemieckich i Europejskich im. Willy Brandta Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego”, nr 1 (2003), p. 21.

³ 30% of respondents stated it was something “not spoken of”, although only 17% were convinced “you were not allowed” to speak of sex.

⁴ Ibidem, pp. 24, 28–29.

An analysis of the results of the survey carried out by Fleischer, relatively innovative in Poland, provides some information on social consciousness regarding the phenomenon of taboo but, at the same time, begs the question whether this type of research makes sense. Can you ask questions regarding taboo in the same manner you ask Poles about their holiday or voting preferences? Is taboo only something you are not allowed to say/is not spoken of? Where certain things, such as sex, are not spoken of? At home, with husband or wife, or at work? What does it mean to speak negatively about the Church? Does this relate to a discussion of columnists about secret agents in the Polish Church during the communist era? Or to criticising a poor sermon during Sunday dinner?

These concerns lead a social historian researching the communist-era Poland to believe that the fact that none of the sociologists of the 60's and 70's had the idea to carry out a similar survey is not worth regretting⁵. The quantitative sociological research once again confirms that there are enormous difficulties in grasping the scientific phenomenon of taboo in society in 20th century. It is also undoubtedly related to the great conceptual confusion and identifying taboo simply as a ban, norm, decency, and finally, political correctness, superstition, dogma, silence or omission⁶.

Taboo. Semantic journeys.

The concept of taboo, literally meaning "forbidden", "sacred" brought over by James Cook, or rather, due to objective reasons, by his successor as captain — Sir James King, in the logbook from the Polynesian islands at the end of the eighteenth century, can, without a doubt, be described as one of the most popular goods imported to Europe from overseas⁷. Thanks to the popularity enjoyed, especially in the British

⁵ Permission to carry it out would probably not be granted.

⁶ K. Kończal, *Uniwersalny fenomen*, „Borussia” 37 (2005), p. 31.

⁷ James Cook wrote in his diary: *The people of Atooi(...) resemble those of Otaheite [Tahiti] in the slovenly state of their religious places, and in offering vegetables and animals to their gods. The taboo also prevails in Atooi, in its full extent, and seemingly with much more rigour than even at Tangataboo. For the people here always asked, with great eagerness and signs of fear to offend, whether any particular thing, which they desire to see, or we were unwilling to shew, was taboo, or, as they pronounced the word, tafoo?*”, quoted in: F. Stein-

Isles, through the writings of the famous captain, the concept gradually took up a stunning career in the colloquial languages of European countries. As early as at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it entered encyclopaedias, thus filling the language 'vacuum', to express "secularised sanctities and simultaneously prohibition of their violation"⁸. Explorers and adventurers, who followed in the footsteps of Cook, have also felt obliged to pay special attention to the phenomenon of taboo. According to critical researchers, nineteenth-century explorers reported public usage of the word *taboo* as often as the word *bak-sheesh* can be heard when travelling to the cities of the Levant, even though, according to Captain Cook, *taboo was more often seen than heard*, and as a word (however ridiculous this may sound) was hardly noticeable.

Overt and hidden meanings of taboo were studied by the greatest anthropologists, sociologists and psychologists of the second half of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century: William Robertson Smith, James Frazer, Sigmund Freud, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Alfred Radcliffe-Brown, Émile Durkheim⁹. Particular interest in taboo emerged in Britain in the second half of the nineteenth century; what contemporary critics justify with the Victorian minds' fascination with the forbidden. It is justified to say that the publications issued and discussed in the studies of the University of Cambridge were the answer to this era's social demand for this type of topic. Franz Steiner observed, prior to World War II, that a reflection on the functioning of taboo is very strongly associated with the culture contemporary to the examiner/observer of the phenomenon¹⁰. The very fact that James Cook was the first to draw attention to taboo in the religious and magical space of the Polynesian communities did not necessarily mean — he wrote — that his

er, *Selected writings*, vol. 1: *Taboo, truth and religion*, ed. by J. Adler, R. Fardon, New York: Berghahn Books 1999, p. 109. Cf. K. O'Grady, *The Semantics of Taboo. Menstrual Prohibitions in the Hebrew Bible*, in: *Wholly Woman, Holy Blood: A Feminist Critique of Purity and Impurity (Studies in Antiquity and Christianity)*, ed. by K. De Troyer, J.A. Herbert, J.A. Johnson, A.-M. Korte, Trinity Press International 2003, pp. 1–3.

⁸ K. Kończal, *Uniwersalny fenomen...*, p. 33.

⁹ E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Preface*, in: F. Steiner, *Taboo*, Routledge 2004 (Reprint edition), p. 12.

¹⁰ F. Steiner, *Selected writings...*, pp. 132–139.

predecessors, the great Spanish and Danish explorers, had not come across it. Perhaps none of them found it as important as the protestant explorer.

Taboo has widely been used by religious studies researchers for comparative analysis of the great cultures, especially within Judaism, and it served them to prove, using the theory of evolution, the thesis of the transformation of primitive cultures towards progressive and ethical ones. According to James Frazer, taboo, which as universally agreed upon, uniquely combines impurity and sanctity, was one of the essential elements of magical thinking and, as “a negative form of magic”, was used to prevent unwanted events. In this way, the demonic power inherent in the taboo was used to prove the specificity, but also the inferiority, of ‘primitive cultures’ to ‘developed cultures’. According to Robert Marett, it provided protection from danger resulting from the supernatural powers of people, things and places. Émile Durkheim also considered taboo as an extremely important component of religion. He considered the prohibition of contact with what had been desecrated a prerequisite for establishing contact with sanctity¹¹.

Franz Steiner, an employee of the Institute of Social Anthropology of the University of Oxford, a very devout Jewish immigrant from the Czech Republic, was the first researcher to undertake a thorough and critical analysis of the functioning of this concept in the field of cultural anthropology. He concluded something that is even today repeated like a mantra in all modern studies. He wrote that a lot of very different issues are discussed under the heading ‘taboo’¹².

According to Steiner, taboo can be generally described as a phenomenon linked primarily to the mechanisms of obedience, of ritual nature, including to specific rules of behaviour in emergency situations, strictly adhered to, which as such are not only related to the protection of individuals in danger but also to the protection of the whole of community from “endangered — and therefore dangerous — persons”¹³. He noted, however, that when considering taboo, we have to currently take into account a number of social mechanisms, forms of which do not fall un-

¹¹ Taboo, in: Robert H. Winthrop, *Dictionary of Concepts in Cultural Anthropology*, Greenwood Press, 1991, pp. 295–297.

¹² F. Steiner, *Selected writings...*, p.107.

¹³ Ibidem.

der one category. This was in contradiction with the existing broad practical application of this category in the field of social sciences, where the narrow understanding of taboo as a negative sanction — “a prohibition whose infringement results in an automatic penalty without human or supernatural mediation”¹⁴. Steiner rejected the unambiguous definition of *taboo* formulated by Margaret Mead in 1935, noting it was not even applicable to the peoples of the Pacific, where it supposedly derived from. As proof of this, he quoted Captain King's story about a girl who visited the European ship and had some prohibited foods, consisting of, inter alia, pork, and then, as the records tell us, she did not drop dead immediately, but was heavily beaten as punishment by her countrymen. He pointed out that the Polynesian taboo itself, which incidentally he described as unusual, concerned practices aimed at “avoiding certain behaviour” that could involve very different issues not related to magic: reserving rights to specific items, selecting cereals to be cultivated in a given place, subordinating local dignitaries to the ruler, etc¹⁵.

The structural functionalists proposed the new approach to the subject of taboo. They finally ceased to associate taboo with ‘irrational’ ‘unenlightened’, with ‘primitive mentality’. Radcliffe-Brown has interpreted *taboo* as a value of ritual nature, through which the most fundamental values for social life are revealed. Rites of passage associated with maturation, entering into a marriage and death played a particularly important role in this system. Such an approach has been developed by the British anthropologist Mary Douglas, who demonstrated that all social structures are connected by a thin and tangled thread, woven by the concepts of impurity, disorder, danger and taboo¹⁶.

Mary Douglas's considerations on taboo appeared in the least appropriate moment for them — the era of flower power and joyful violation of all possible taboos. Consequently, her arguments did not meet with any special interest at the time of their publication and had to wait for a long time to be recognised. Her *Purity and Danger* has finally been recognised as one of the most interesting and influential works in the field of cultural anthropology published in the twentieth century.

¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 108.

¹⁵ Ibidem, pp. 209–211.

¹⁶ *Taboo*, pp. 295–297.

As Joanna Tokarska-Bakir emphasises — expanding the horizons of research on taboo and its relativisation was not the only breakthrough concept of Mary Douglas. She also referred to *dirt* (impurity) as a very important element of a cultural system. The fact that she demonstrated “the inner rationality of prohibitions and their inevitability, however confusing and burdensome they might be,” must have had a negative impact on the reception of her book at the time of its publication in 1966¹⁷. Douglas has, to some extent, opposed all those who considered taboo to be atavistic social practices, and those breaking them became ‘soldiers of modernity and rationalism’. According to her, taboo is not in itself bad or good, right or wrong; it simply exists and, in its own way, affects the social norms and values¹⁸. Therefore, it should not be used to evaluate the world as a black and white reality.

Taboo — Douglas writes — “is a spontaneous device for protecting the distinctive categories of the universe. Taboo protects the local consensus on how the world is organised. It shores up wavering certainty. It reduces intellectual and social disorder”¹⁹.

Taboo as ordering by avoiding

*Taboo will exist as long as there will be culture — all the same; be it the culture of African Lele, American criminal gangs, ‘international banking conspiracies’ (Richard Rorty), German concentration camps, Byzantine or gay culture — for taboo is a condition of its self-definition*²⁰.

Only such an explicit recognition of the functioning of taboo as a universal element which governs social order may serve a historian as a methodological basis for the analysis of societies of the twentieth century, although it certainly places our discussion within the structuralist positions and the belief in the universality of the ritualisation of social

¹⁷ J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Energia odpadków*, in: M. Douglas, *Czystość i zmaza*, Warszawa 2007, pp. 7–12. C.f. B. Walczak, *Brud a społeczeństwo. Funkcja marginalizacji kategorii z perspektywy antropologii społecznej*, „Kultura i Społeczeństwo” 50, 4 (2006), pp. 143–156.

¹⁸ G. Koch, *Between Fear of Contact and Self-Preservation: Tabor and its Relation to Dead*, “New German Critique”, No. 90: Taboo, Trauma, Holocaust (2003), p. 73.

¹⁹ M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, New York 2002, p. 9.

²⁰ Ibidem.

life, subject to the reservation of the general volatility of social structures and patterns of thinking made by Douglas. Taboo is present in every culture, but in a specific way for each culture, just as every culture has its own concept of 'dirt' and 'defilement'. In her opinion, the fear of breaking a taboo is also universal, and it is related to a conviction that certain phenomena /items /people are impure.

In this way, it overcomes the (still present) basic division of taboo between the primitive taboo — relating to the exotic system of primitive beliefs — and the contemporary taboo, which, despite various differences, are similar, pointing to the trophic taboo as the best example.

Taboo processes, in Douglas's concept, are part of the system of methods of dealing with phenomena not falling into the categories of cultural pattern and having 'ambiguities' which can not be explicitly recorded anywhere. Both of them, as so-called anomalies, are associated with 'dirt', and according to Douglas, with 'what is not in place', and thus it is a potential threat to the existing order. The tendency to organise 'what is not in place', what is 'unclear' provokes a concrete social action. According to Tokarska-Bakir, Douglas identified five patterns of dealing with these "different situations":

1. Avoiding 'anomalies' through the establishment of taboo, which confirms and reinforces the definitions with which they are incompatible;
2. Disqualification of 'anomaly' through re-qualification, which limits its ambiguity;
3. Physical control;
4. Labelling a phenomenon as a 'danger', thus pushing the 'anomaly' away, creating a cordon sanitaire around it;
5. Sacralisation of 'anomaly', subjecting it to rituals and then using it for the same ends as they are used in mythology and poetry to enrich meaning and to call attention to other levels of existence²¹.

For the researcher of taboo, these conclusions are important, as they let you realise that 'tabooisation' as a way of action against 'anomaly' is never detached. It is almost always accompanied by other phenomena. Joanna Tokarska-Bakir illustrated this phenomenon using the example of homosexuality in nineteenth-century English society, which

²¹ M. Douglas, *Purity and danger...*, pp. 48–50.

simultaneously subjected people of this sexual orientation to physical control through punishments such as imprisonment, ideological control through association with danger (a cordon sanitaire is here formed by the odium of sin and vice, and then by association to a disease that has to be cured), disqualification of 'anomaly' (a new norm appears in the scientific discourse — homosexuality is beginning to be defined as a different sexual identity and not as a sinful choice) and, finally, 'anomaly' is avoided through the introduction of taboo (social ostracism — homosexual men are described as 'decadents' and 'aesthetes')²².

In a similar way, you can organise the social practices relating to one of the phenomena defined as a social problem of Communist-era Poland-divorce.

At the end of the sixties, in rural houses in the Ciechanów area, where divorce has remained an urban eccentricity, something spoken of from the church pulpit, on the radio, television, within school commons or in films shown by a visiting rural touring cinema twice a month, Warsaw ethnologists have noted the following, typical according to them, statement:

*Once a woman enters a relationship, there's nothing you can do about it. Guys torment women; she's gonna do a bit of crying, but has to raise her kids; otherwise, she would be ashamed in front of people*²³.

"Life was not easy after divorce" — complained women in response to the first survey on the subject carried out in Poland by the "Kobieta i Życie" magazine in 1974:

*My friends and family turned away from me. Men were interested in me, but they only tried to get me to bed*²⁴.

A woman who left her husband and moved from her native village to a nearby town wrote:

*Among people I felt as if I was a "leper". People here are prejudiced, and a woman without a husband is suspicious. I was young, rather pretty, but I was scared of a bad reputation*²⁵.

²² J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Energia odpadków...*, p. 34.

²³ A. Zadrożyńska, *Zawarcie małżeństwa. Analiza systemu wartościowania*, Warszawa 1974, p. 49.

²⁴ „Kobieta i Życie” nr 19, 12 V.1974, p. 10.

²⁵ „Kobieta i Życie” nr 18, 5 V.1974, p. 13.

The above sources indicate the existence of the practice of *bypassing/avoidance*, i.e. of the tabooisation of divorce through the practice of ostracism.

Simultaneously, the sociologists of the first half of the sixties recorded residents of Nowa Huta stating that:

*...there is one divorced woman in our neighbourhood, and now no one knows where she is... These sort of people usually don't have a place to stay, so they hit the bottle, and women tend to start hanging out in pubs...*²⁶.

Divorce was also to be, according to many surveyed women, a downward spiral leading women to prostitution²⁷. All of these statements indicate further control practices (ideological control): associating divorce with a real danger; in this case, with phenomena perceived as social pathologies — alcoholism, immoral conduct and finally prostitution.

It should be noted, however, that twenty years earlier, divorce had been, using Douglas's terminology, qualified as 'a norm', when, on the 1st of January 1946, it was introduced into the Polish Civil Code. So, when ethnologists, led by Anna Zadrożyńska at the turn of the sixties and seventies, visited a collective farming village in the Koszalin area, the inhabitants of which had migrated from the Kielce area, they heard stories of people's lives for whom divorce was often an integral part of life's experience, which did not result in stigmatism²⁸.

Simultaneously, the analysis of court cases carried out by Józef Górecki demonstrate that a divorce was easily obtained in cases of spouses who had been separated for decades or who hated each other with a passion and demonstrated this hatred in the courtroom, e.g. "the husband's behaviour indicates he is a psychopath". It was favourable (e.g. useful for convincing the court about the need to grant the divorce) to demonstrate, apart from emotional tensions, "primitiveness" and "obtuseness". It was advisable to deliver to the court a certificate of criminal record, rehab treatment, a stay in prison or a psychiatric institution, etc. The following words from the courtroom Górecki quotes as persuasive:

²⁶ J. Wódz, *Rozwody w świadomości społecznej mieszkańców Nowej Huty*, „Kultura i Społeczeństwo” 9, 1 (1965), pp. 137, 142.

²⁷ J. Wódz, *Zjawiska patologii społecznej a sankcje społeczne i prawne*, Warszawa 1973, p. 161.

²⁸ Ibidem, pp. 63–68.

"I was afraid of him; he is a real bastard. I hate him and will not live with him." In such cases, the chances of getting a divorce increased. In the case of uncontested divorce cases, the chances decreased. After all, cultured people should be able to come to an agreement for the sake of the child²⁹. The legal practice of the sixties led to a phenomenon, described by Barbara Łobodzińska in 1986, of the criminalisation of divorce, which was to be primarily associated with the margins of society. One instance has thus applied two completely different patterns of action toward divorce, incorporating a kind of chaos into the 'disorder' of the officially propagated social system of Communist-era Poland. Perhaps this inconsistency can be interpreted as evidence of the weakness of the instance. Without a doubt, however, the taboo of divorce in Poland of the 60's was reinforced by a number of other actions, pushing this phenomenon into the margins of social acceptance.

Morphology of taboo

Taboo does not only operate in a complex system of the social control of phenomena which are considered undesirable, but it itself has a multilevel structure. On the one hand, it consists of the taboo area (the so-called object of taboo) and an instance supervising its observance (an element justifying compliance with the taboo). On the other hand, as we might have observed, it is subject to stratification divisions: for public discourses and for different social groups.

The above-mentioned actions toward 'anomaly' may indicate to the researcher that he/she is dealing with a potential object of taboo. Taboo is, however, an informal prohibition of a certain behaviour/requisition to bypass (avoid). There are no records of topics which, for example, should not be raised, of topics that cause embarrassment, shame or even disgust. Taboo leaves traces, however, examples of which appeared in the above considerations, which are referred to as its *manifestations*. The most important manifestations of a specific taboo in a society include:

1. a sanction imposed when an individual openly violates a social prohibition or when the news of this fact becomes public. It is manifested by disapproval on the part of the environment, conflict and

²⁹ J. Górecki, *Rozwód*, Warszawa 1965, p.105.

- even by the exclusion of the individual from the community, social ostracism (according to some researchers, this type of 'manifestation' is associated with a narrowly conceived moral taboo);
2. a sense of shame / embarrassment / experienced by the individual violating the prohibition or having contact with its manifestation;
 3. public comments on the functioning of taboo, made by our contemporaries, who in various forms (scientific, literary, film, etc.) present a critical diagnosis of the society;
 4. a need to 'bypass the topic'³⁰ in public discourse. Too direct, too suggestive, too 'communicative' forms, which refer to the phenomena controlled by social censorship, are excluded from the normal use of language and are not spoken of. Direct statements are replaced by euphemisms, metaphors, diminutives, comparisons, or other alternative forms / e.g. medical language³¹.

It is worth mentioning at this point that, thus far, it is language taboo that has attracted particular the interest of researchers, in and outside of Poland, due to the most available sources.

To analyse taboo, one should not only look for manifestations of taboo, answer questions on objects of taboo, controlling instances, extent of its impact, context or mechanisms accompanying it, strengthening or weakening its force, but above all, repeat the question about its purpose (apart, of course, from the general application of the universal human pursuit of maximum order = control of the surrounding world). Finally, we are left with the 'simple' task of finding out what impact the taboo and its changes have on the life of a particular Pole. In the context of individual experience, subsequent, very important questions about the role of shame, disgust and fear inevitably arise.

The study of border areas allows us to grasp the essence of the rules the social order of Communist-era Poland relied upon. This will help us to draw conclusions on internal social tensions, the strength of modernisation processes and the durability of 'traditional' thinking, as it was referred to in the era of our interest. I also think that it will show the diversity of Polish post-war environments, which one can lose sight

³⁰ Zob. szerzej Z. Leszczyński, *Szkice o tabu językowym*, Lublin 1988.

³¹ Cf.: S. Widlak, *Zjawisko tabu językowego*, „Lud” 52 (1968); Allan K., Burr-idge K., *Forbidden words. Taboo and Censoring of the Language*, Cambridge University Press 2006.

of when looking at post-war Poland from the perspective of Krakow or Warsaw.

Tabu jako kategoria badawcza w warsztacie historyka

Artykuł dokumentuje poszukiwania sposobów wykorzystania w badaniach historiograficznych tabu, jako kategorii charakterystycznej dla badań antropologicznych. Autorka postawiła sobie za cel odpowiedź na pytanie o możliwości zastosowania tej kategorii w praktyce badawczej, prezentację towarzyszących badaniom wątpliwości oraz korzyści, jakie tego typu interdyscyplinarne ujęcie może nieść dla zrozumienia epoki historycznej.

Zasadniczą część analityczną tekstu poprzedza wprowadzenie, mające na celu podkreślenie podstawowych różnic semantycznych pojawiających się w toku rozwoju naukowej refleksji na temat tabu, ze szczególnym podkreśleniem koncepcji Mary Douglas, według której wszelkie struktury społeczną są „powiązane cienką i splataną nicią utkaną z idei nieczystości, nieporządku, zagrożenia i tabu”. W nawiązaniu do refleksji Joanny Tokarskiej-Bakir na temat historycznego funkcjonowania tytułowego zjawiska, autorka stara się wypracować projekt „morfologii” tabu użyteczny w praktycznych badaniach źródłowych na temat tabu obyczajowego obecnego w wyobrażeniach społecznych w powojennej Polsce.

Tabu als Forschungskategorie im historischen Verfahren

Der Artikel stellt die Suche danach dar, wie das Tabu als eine für Anthropologie charakteristische Kategorie in den historiografischen Forschungen genutzt wird. Zum Ziel setzt sich die Autorin die Antwort auf die Frage nach der Möglichkeit, diese Kategorie in die Forschungspraxis umzusetzen. Außerdem stellt sie bei den Forschungen aufgetauchte Zweifel sowie unbestrittene Nutzen dar, mit denen diese interdisziplinäre Auffassung zu dem Verständnis der historischen Epoche beitragen kann.

Dem analytischen Hauptteil des Textes geht die Einleitung voran, deren Funktion ist, semantische Grundunterschiede zu betonen, die in der Forschung zum Thema Tabu auftauchen. Hervorgehoben wird die Konzeption von Mary Douglas, nach der alle gesellschaftlichen Struk-

turen „mit dem dünnen, geflochtenen Faden gebunden sind, der aus den Ideen der Unredlichkeit, Unordnung, Bedrohung und Tabu gewebt wird“. In Bezug auf die Reflexion von Joanna Tokarska-Bakir zum Tabuphänomen, bemüht sich die Autorin, das Projekt der „Tabumorphologie“ auszuarbeiten, das sich für die praktischen Quellenforschungen zum Thema des gesellschaftlichen Tabus, welches in den soziologischen Vorstellungen im Nachkriegspolen auftritt, als nützlich erweist.

Piotr Perkowski

Social order and social pathology in the People's Republic of Poland. Comments on the studies in the history of private and public lives

After the period of systemic transformation in Poland, there was no demand for the historical works devoted to the issue of the social life in the People's Republic of Poland. One of the reasons was the requirement to legitimize the new social order and political system. The historiography of the time concentrated on describing the blank pages and distortions of the Marxist historiography and on the history of the opposition and social resistance. It was dominated by political themes. The earliest proposals to study everyday life of the period of People's Poland were made in the mid-1990s¹. Borrowed from the French historiography, these proposals referred to the traditional historical narration in which the history of everyday life was marginalized to give way to the 'serious' reflections on political history; the first played the role of a mere interesting supplement to the latter. The studies of the history of the public and private lives leaving aside the contributory character of the history of everyday life have been inaugurated only recently in the contemporary Polish historiography².

However, the historiographic reflections on everyday life still lack references to the narration of the testimonies to the period produced by

¹ T. Szarota, *Życie codzienne w PRL — propozycja badawcza*, „Polska 1944/45–1989. Studia i materiały”, vol. 1 (1995), pp. 201–215.

² B. Klich-Kluczevska, *Przez dziurkę od klucza. Życie prywatne w Krakowie (1945–1989)*, Warszawa 2005; K. Kosiński, *Oficjalne i prywatne życie młodzieży w czasach PRL*, Warszawa 2006; B. Brzostek, *Za progiem. Codziennosc w przestrzeni publicznej Warszawy lat 1955–1970*, Warszawa 2007.

a variety of official institutions (such as state institutions, the mass media, or scientific papers from that time). Polish historians still seem to be overtly trusting when it comes to the discursive practices of the period and use them as a neutral instrument for describing the social reality of the time. There are cases when certain definitions of the phenomena of the social life in People's Poland are repeated by historians without a second thought. For example, deeper consideration is not given to the historical and political development of such concepts as 'hooliganism' or 'homosexuality', which unexpectedly become nothing but the instances of the distortion of social life, understood similarly by the then militiamen in their duty reports, as well as the today's historians. On the other hand, Polish historians approach other concepts used by the authorities and researchers in People's Poland with due suspicion. Account is taken of the intentional propaganda technique of addressing the members of the pro-independence underground resistance movement as 'bandits', or the practice of using the term 'saboteurs' when referring to the workers of an industrial plant where a breakdown has occurred. Full account is also taken of the linguistic abuse in classifying the youth who were protesting in 1968 as 'hooligans', and yet it is ignored that the very category of hooliganism as a form of street delinquency also requires a much more thorough analysis containing a reference to the practices of imposing discipline on the public and private spheres of social life.

A study of human behaviour and attitudes in People's Poland cannot be carried out in disregard for the language of the media, official documents and science of the time. Obviously the discourse on public and private morality was not a communist invention. A reference can be made here to the understanding of maintaining public order in the cities in Europe during the period of strenuous industrialization and the popularity of nationalist ideas observed towards the end of the 19th century. According to that idea, the city's public sphere was divided into good and evil, while the dwellers were classified as either pure or impure compliant with the said Manichean geography, which in turn expressed itself in distinguishing between the rich and the poor districts of London in the Victorian England. According to Judith Walkowitz, in that largest city in the world at the time, the contemporary journalism did not

treat the inhabitants of the poor, full of strangers from the outside and dangerous eastern part of the city as belonging to the national community³.

A hypothesis could be put forward that this way of looking at the social structure of cities, the urban space and public order was maintained in the post-war Poland as well. This antithetical reasoning was translated into social definitions in People's Poland only to the extent that it was believed that there existed some clearly defined group and some special locations where the degeneration of the private and public life took place. Besides, that reference to 'the hotbed of evil and offence' served the communists as a pretext to liquidate public utility establishments operated by way of private initiative — both in the country and in the city. The militia documents from the 1940s and 1950s speak of the search for the particularly 'impure' locations on a city map. Their authors wrote about the ruins of bombed cities and hideouts full of bandits, thieves, hooligans, prostitutes and homosexuals, referred to collectively as the underworld. These groups were being reeled off one by one in the reports, marking off the hotbeds of social pathologies on a city map.

The 'thaw' journalism in the mid-1950s also featured representations of certain city districts and their inhabitants as the places of moral decline of young men and numerous women. This way of thinking was reflected perfectly in *Poemat dla dorosłych* [lit. a poem for adults], a 'thaw' poem written by Adam Ważyk in 1955. One may hazard a thesis that the press articles from the period, having the hallmarks of interventions, defined the issues of the public and private lives in a manner similar to that of the contemporary militia reports. Since writing about delinquency in socialism had been allowed on the rising tide of political thaw, many phenomena were played up. Yet there is no evidence of a drastic increase in crime during that period. As can be concluded from the pages of *Po Prostu* [lit. simply], the lead opinion-forming magazine in the circles of Polish intelligentsia at the time, it was suggested to toughen up measures, introduce summary proceedings, impose administrative orders, such as restricting the right of the youth to spend time

³ J.R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight. Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, London 1992, pp. 17–19.

in the public sphere, or appoint special citizens' formations intended to maintain order. Committing an offence was often equated with hooliganism⁴. This way of writing about Polish city life displays both disgust and fascination, a characteristic resemblance to the accounts of living in Victorian London. Nowa Huta, a flagship project of Polish Stalinism, resembles East End in the late 19th century; it constitutes the bad face of the static and intelligent Krakow and attracts attention of the journalists concerned about the otherness of workers and fascinated by it. After the period during which the bourgeois centre of Krakow became a symbol of reaction, while Nowa Huta under construction was a project of the modern communist community, an unexpected role reversal took place in the mid-1950s. Nonetheless, the antithetical way of evaluating urban space remained unchanged.

The 20th c. totalitarian systems enhanced this mode of speaking and functioning, the division into the 'pure' and the 'impure', the familiar 'us' and the strange 'them'. Zygmunt Bauman⁵ pointed to a significant contrast in the way of thinking of 20th c. political elites and societies, namely that of what was 'well-known, pure and ensuring social order' as opposed to the phenomena considered 'strange, filthy and undermining order by excessive mobility'. The scale of the disciplinary measures changed in relation to the 19th century in terms of toughening and mass enforcement of penalties, perfecting the methods of gathering information about private lives, both in the Third Reich and the USSR⁶. In Poland in the late 1940s diverse social processes and problems became vulgarized in the official messages. The reflection on social issues was simplified particularly in the period of the ideological offensive (1948–1955). A matter of considerable significance was that at that time the Marxist-Leninist ideology began to drive away sociology, since the latter was defined as bourgeois. Although Polish sociology revived in the

⁴ A. Leszczyński, *Sprawy do załatwienia. Listy do „Po Prostu” 1955–1957*, Warszawa 2000, pp. 125–132.

⁵ Z. Bauman, *Ponowoczesność jako źródło cierpień*, Warszawa 2000, pp. 11–67.

⁶ E.D. Heineman, *What Difference Does a Husband Make? Women and Marital Status in Nazi and Postwar Germany*, Berkeley–Los Angeles 1999, pp. 27–28; J. Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin! Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War*, New Jersey 2001, pp. 126–128.

1960s, after the thaw in October 1956, and it was decided to abandon the aggressive forms of ideologization and the more repressive forms of enforcing discipline on private life, the mode of defining social reality and socio-economic problems by means of 'sorting the wheat from the chaff' was maintained until the decline of People's Poland. It also seemed to have been noticeable after the period of systemic transformation at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s in the political practice of the representatives of former elites of both post-communist and Solidarity provenance.

It is worthwhile to present in greater detail the ways of utilizing the 'purity' metaphor in post-war Poland. The sphere of private life was subject to normative control and purification procedures throughout the period of People's Poland, although these processes intensified particularly during the implementation of the Six-Year Plan (1950–55), when various categories of the enemy, such as the 'kulak' or the 'speculator', were the main focus of attention of the repressive apparatus. The most frequent term used in the official propaganda language was the 'social plague', while the most popular concepts in the research papers since the 1960s were 'pathologies' and 'deviations'⁷. The first included mainly selected common offences, such as thievery or organized crime. An exceptionally wide range of pathologies were discerned in the behaviour of the contemporary youth. The utmost significance in this field was attributed to hooliganism, all types of juvenile delinquencies, as well as the youth subcultures, such as the first Polish youth subculture of *bikiniarze*, a counterpart of American beatniks or English Teddy Boys (the term usually applied in the propaganda texts at the time was *bikiniarstwo*, the name of the subculture as a whole, as compared to *bikiniarz* [plural *bikiniarze*], i.e. a representative of that subculture). Other described pathologies included negative attitude to one's job, reflected in negligence, avoidance, or lack of employment (*bumelanctwo*, lit. slacking), or individual's excessive mobility (*włóczęgostwo*, lit. vagrancy). Alcoholism was also considered a pathology, classified

⁷ J. Wódz, *Zjawiska patologii społecznej*, Warszawa–Kraków 1974, pp. 6–22; A. Kojder, *Wybrana bibliografia polskich publikacji z zakresu patologii społecznej 1948–1974*, in: *Zagadnienia patologii społecznej*, ed. by A. Podgórecki, Warszawa 1976, p. 647; A. Podgórecki, *Patologia życia społecznego*, Warszawa 1969, pp. 128–279.

under the term 'drunkenness', and so was gambling and, since the end of the 1960s, drug abuse. The most frequently mentioned pathology of the family life was divorce. Prostitution, though a legally allowable occupation at the time, was another condemned pathology, such as suicide, mental disease, or any unacceptable sexual behaviour, take youth sex or homosexuality. The term 'deviation' was a synonym for pathology at times (e.g. homosexuality was considered both a sexual deviation and a social pathology), although usually its meaning was somewhat less pejorative. Deviant was the name for a person whose behaviour violated the established social conventions. In this sense, such situations as young couples holding hands in public were defined as a form of deviant behaviour. Considering the fact that the category of deviations covered numerous types of behaviour with disparate degrees of social acceptance, a distinction was made between positive and negative deviations, and the researchers faced a serious problem with qualifying the particular deviations as either of the two categories.

The family life pathologies were said to involve divorce, juvenile crime, suicidal attempts made by children and the youth, or alcoholism, while excessive individualism of a family member was considered a deviation⁸. The grounds for the most frequent undesirable phenomenon, namely divorce, were seen in the industrialization and urbanization processes along with an increase in social mobility, their consequent urban lifestyle, marital infidelity, alcoholism and drug abuse. The causes for divorces were also sought in women's professional activity (since they could not take care of children during work), a decreasing number of children in families, the developing branch of services offered as a substitute to aid received from relatives, an increasingly wider social consent for divorce, and the growing number of mental disorders.

One of the spheres which remained a taboo and were subject to the process of purification was human sexuality. In post-war Poland, the model of sexual freedom propagated in the USSR in the 1920s was not

⁸ A. Strzembosz, *Niektóre zjawiska patologiczne we współczesnej rodzinie*, in: *Przemiany rodziny polskiej*, ed. by J. Komorowska, Warszawa 1975, pp. 343–360; A. Dodziuk-Lityńska, D. Markowska, *Rodzina w miastach polskich. Przegląd badań społecznych z lat 1945–1968*, Wrocław 1971, pp. 284–304; Z. Tyszcza, *Socjologia rodziny*, 2nd edition, PWN, Warszawa 1976, pp. 226–233.

accepted either in the period of Stalinism with its claims to control private lives, or during the rule of prudish Władysław Gomułka, or during the decade of Edward Gierek, the time in the 1970s characteristic for its ostensible openness to the Western morals, or even in the 1980s, when imported VCRs and video cassettes appeared in some houses. The requirement for sexual abstinence dominated throughout the whole era of People's Poland, though with varying intensity. Moreover, in the first half of the 1950s severe condemnation for unbridled sexual life would have been addressed not only to women, but also to men. People's Poland was closer to the morals in the Soviet Russia of the 1930s, the period defined by Igor Kon as the 'Stalinist sexophobia'⁹, than that of the 1920s, when one of the alternatives was the pro-revolutionary liberal sexual ethics promoted by Alexandra Kollontai. Obviously the methods of segregating and purifying people's sex life were not Stalin's invention. On the eve of modernity, distinguishing between the deviations embedded deep in the individual's personality and the modes of behaviour defined as standards was one of the founding principles of sexology¹⁰.

According to the design of a modern 20th century state, public life should have been free of any impure sexual behaviour. This was the approach applied in Poland mainly to prostitution — houses of prostitution were prohibited in Polish towns both before and after WWII, and attempts were also made to control prostitutes' health so that they did not infect the 'pure' citizens¹¹. Homosexuality, tabooed even stronger than prostitution, was approached in much the same manner as the latter. Mentioned only occasionally in the sexology books from the period (and much more frequently by criminologists), homosexual behaviour was put next to such pathologies as drugs and alcohol, sadism and maso-

⁹ I.S. Kon, *The Sexual Revolution in Russia*, translated by J. Riordan, New York 1995, pp. 67–84.

¹⁰ Ch. Waters, *Sexology*, in: *The Modern History of Sexuality*, ed. by H.G. Cocks, M. Houlbrook, Houndmills–Basingstoke–Hampshire 2006, pp. 44–45.

¹¹ M. Rodak, *Prostytucja w Lublinie w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym*, in: *Metamorfozy społeczne. Badania nad dziejami społecznymi XIX i XX w.*, vol. 2, ed. by J. Żarnowski, Warszawa 2007, pp. 189–212; B. Klich-Kluczevska, *Unzüchtiger Realsozialismus. Prostitution in der Volksrepublik Polen*, „Osteuropa“, vol. 6 (2006), pp. 302–317.

chism, narcissism, exhibitionism, venereal diseases, prostitution, group sex, rape, premature ejaculation and female frigidity. Compliant with the metaphor of the pure being infected by the impure, the sources of male homosexuality were sought in having been seduced by a teacher or older colleague as a child¹².

It is not difficult to notice that the persuasive practices of the period combined multiple types of behaviour of various origins and character under one category. Such combinations were applied to the greatest degree in the language used by the communist authorities and institutions responsible for ensuring public order and enforcing discipline, such as Citizens' Militia, i.e. the contemporary police, Security Service, i.e. the secret police, and Polish People's Army. The task of the state propaganda at the times of the particularly strong social tensions (in 1956, 1968, 1970) was to put forth an enemy category to divert people's attention from supply shortages or other problems. Such was the case in October 1956 and in 1968, though on different grounds, with the use of anti-Semitic feeling in the society. As a consequence, the definition of public enemy evolved depending on the demand from the state authorities. An explicit example of that were the groups of young people called hooligans. Sociologists in People's Poland claimed aptly that in the first place hooligans are a social group whose primary trait is a penchant for fun and violating public order¹³. Yet for the Bolsheviks and the Western policy-makers and researchers in the 1920s hooliganism was a useful metaphor for depicting the primitive part of the youth culture (the nature as opposed to the culture), uncontrollable and liable for turning the streets into a jungle¹⁴. For party ideologists and Citizens' Militia in Poland, hooliganism was a category which involved selected groups of the youth, depending on the requirement. In the Stalinist press hooligans were equated with *bikiniarze*, and usually identified with common criminals. On the other hand, in the 1960s and 1970s the category of hooligans was used with reference to the protesting students and workers:

¹² L. Starowicz, *Eros, natura, kultura*, Warszawa 1973, pp. 278–280.

¹³ A. Pawełczyńska, *Przestępczość grup nieletnich*, Warszawa 1964, pp. 123–126.

¹⁴ A.E. Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia. Enthusiasts, Bohemians, Delinquents*, Bloomington–Indianapolis 2000, pp. 170–176.

Hooliganism is a form of art for art's sake, it is about doing something for the mere joy of doing it, *pour la fun*, as a friend of mine puts it, never mind the purposes. Yet propaganda attributes a surprisingly high level of political awareness to hooligans, who are seen as evil creatures knowing their reasons and goals. Beside that, they obviously are a tool in the hands of the Western imperialists ...

— as Michał Głowiński described the propaganda of March 1968¹⁵.

A supplementary notion was the rhetoric of the infectious stranger; hooligans were accused of infecting the 'healthy youth' with drunkenness, indiscipline, sexual offence, and even depression. The rhetoric of infection was present in Polish Stalinism:

This youth, infected ... with the urge for pleasure, the petty bourgeois youth, let us make it clear, the youth soaked with the petty bourgeois ideology, the American ideology, if you prefer, these young people have developed a conviction about fun that there is no fun without alcohol, without intoxication, without frenzy, without unconsciousness, without sexual excesses, is there? They do not realize that this is not the way for people to have fun, this form of fun leads to animalization.

— said Bolesław Bierut at a meeting with the activists from the Association of Polish Youth in 1953¹⁶.

A popular idea reflected in the order-establishing practices in People's Poland was that one pathology must lead to another. Consequently, social reality was defined in medical terms — as a cluster of epidemic focuses which must be isolated from the healthy social structures to prevent the spread of the disease. Overcoming any such focus might prevent the spread of a social disease. The most popular methods included penalizing the infected, maintaining social control and enforcing disciplinary educational measures on the individuals prone to infection. During Stalinism the sources of the social pathologies defined as such were not sought within social structures but beyond. The emergence of any phenomenon considered adverse for the party apparatus was blamed on the activity of the 'hostile forces'. However, these forces

¹⁵ M. Głowiński, *Marcowe gadanie. Komentarze do słów 1966–1971*, Warszawa 1991, p. 116.

¹⁶ Archiwum Akt Nowych [AAN], Komitet Centralny PZPR 237/V/36, *Narada z aktywem ZMP-owskim w KC*, 27.08.1953, p.17.

needed a weak link to be able to interact effectively. Therefore the blame for the appearance of given impurity was put on the individuals described as 'devoid of ideals', e.g. the part of the youth exposed to the temptation of excess individualism and egoism:

A side product of the rough ideological struggle which tears the world apart is definitely the 'ideals-devoid' character of a part of the youth, the peculiar philosophy of living, the philosophy of pleasure, of remembering only about oneself, 'what do I care about others, I must take care of myself, live my life to the full, this is my ideal, this is the meaning of my life'. The enemy is well aware that this attitude is extremely comfortable for them, for that enemy sometimes wins them over to his side by fuelling that urge for pleasure.

— said Bolesław Bierut in his address during the meeting with APY quoted above¹⁷.

This rhetoric of struggle developed the category of an enemy responsible not only for political and economic mishaps, but also for a range of social problems, in particular alcoholism, hooliganism and negative attitude to work. The struggle was for peace and socialism, against imperialism and sabotage, but also against alcoholism, crime, hooliganism and *bikiniarstwo*. Since the mid-1950s, the category of enemy ceased to have been exploited on such a scale, and the 'idealess character' mentioned above was often a synonym for effectiveness in the machinery of power. In the successive years the sources of the phenomena defined as pathologies were sought more readily in variously described cultural changes, such as improper education of the youth, at the same time abandoning the rhetoric of 'hostile activities'.

Polish communists failed to violate the sphere of private life to the extent observed in the USSR during the interwar period. In the revolutionary Russia, the stories of some Bolshevik families evidenced that the experiment of imposing dominance of the public matters over the private ones was performed successively among the activists. Private and family lives were disregarded ostentatiously, which was reflected in the ascetic design of flats, austere clothes, marriages entered into under the influence of the shared ideology and divorces for political reasons, as well as treating children as 'little adults' and parents' mani-

¹⁷ Ibidem, p. 12–23.

fest absence from home¹⁸. Polish communists did not undertake such radical revolutionizing of the bourgeois models even in the first half of the 1950s, when their aspirations to transform private life were at their peak. Obviously complete submission to the public matters was expected according to the official propaganda, but family was never ruled out as a redundant unit of the society. Instead, a reference was made in this respect to the policy propagated in the USSR in the second half of the 1930s, when the state began to promote the pro-family and national values by way of rewarding numerous families, reducing the possibility to get divorced and award the presence of parents both in a factory and at home (especially with regard to women)¹⁹. Polish women's press in the first half of the 1950s also encouraged more effective work in the public sphere, as well as in the private one²⁰. It was particularly symptomatic to claim emphatically that socialism does not strive after breaking up families, but the opposite²¹.

Maybe Polish ideologists did not trust the radical reconstruction of the social structure attempted at in the Soviet Russia of the 1920s. After all, it was the example of the eastern neighbour which showed that even in the times of the most severe cleansing of the nation, terror was unable to disintegrate the ties in a multigenerational or nuclear family to a satisfactory extent²². Also, it appears that the modes of behaviour typical for the protection of private life were practiced throughout the period of People's Poland, including the first half of the 1950s. Such was the case in the circles of the pre-war intelligentsia. The protective strategies assumed different forms, e.g. 'shutting oneself away' or competing with the school for prominence in bringing up children. Due to the ideologization and violence of the state against the individual,

¹⁸ O. Figes, *The Whisperers. Private Life in Stalin's Russia*, New York 2007, ppp. 10–19.

¹⁹ W.Z. Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution. Soviet Family Policy and Social Life 1917–1936*, New York 1995, pp. 340–341.

²⁰ *Jak sobie radzę w pracy i w domu*, „Moda i Życie” 1950, no. 121, p. 10; *Pracujemy wszędzie*, „Przyjaciółka” 1949, no. 10, p. 3.

²¹ *W obronie rodziny*, „Przyjaciółka” 1949, no. 10, p. 5; *O trwałość rodziny*, „Przyjaciółka” 1949, no. 15, p. 3.

²² C. Hooper, *Terror of Intimacy: Family Politics in the 1930s Soviet Union*, in: *Everyday Life in Early Soviet Russia*, ed. by Ch. Kiaer and E. Naiman, Bloomington–Indianapolis 2006, pp. 77–78.

family ties strengthened at the cost of public activity, participating in the political life and acting for the benefit of local communities. As a result, family ties became increasingly stronger during Stalinism and throughout the time under marital law (1981–83) at the expense of participating in the public sphere. The phenomenon was observed in the post-Stalinist Russia, as well as in Poland under the rule of Edward Gierek (in the 1970s) and General Wojciech Jaruzelski (under marital law)²³, with a relatively brief interruption in the years 1980–81, when the victory of the legalized Solidarity trade unions encouraged people to involve in the public life. Yet this involvement was totally in opposition to the idea of the state authorities about public activity.

It seems that the moral values proposed by Polish communism were most readily accepted when they did not clash with the traditional customs and religiousness of the Polish nations. As an outcome of the political decisions regarding national borders, demographic processes and post-war deportations, as well as the Holocaust, the territory of post-war Poland was inhabited mainly by the people who declared themselves as Catholics. Poles remained a nation of believers throughout the period of People's Poland which did not become secularized despite the efforts of some party ideologists. Polish religiousness was characteristic of its folk features (such as the faith in local miracles), and its power was manifested in strong opposition against withdrawing the classes in religious instruction from schools, as well as in mass participation in Corpus Christi processions, pilgrimages to the Jasna Góra Monastery in Częstochowa and other religious practices, which were condemned during Stalinism²⁴. The documents left by party organizations provide evidence of the numerous cases of internal conflicts experienced by rank and file members, and even by the party activists, who had to choose between the faith in communism and the faith in God and taking part in traditional religious celebrations. This must have

²³ V. Shlapentokh, *Public and Private Life of the Soviet People. Changing Values in Post-Stalin Russia*, New York 1989, pp. 153–159; E. Tarkowska, J. Tarkowski, „Amoralny familizm”, czyli o dezintegracji społecznej w Polsce lat osiemdziesiątych, in: J. Tarkowski, *Socjologia świata polityki*, vol. 1: *Władza i społeczeństwo w systemie autorytarnym*, Warszawa 1994, pp. 264–265.

²⁴ J. Żaryn, *Sacrum i profanum. Uwagi o religijności Polaków w latach 1945–1955*, „Polska 1944/45–1989” vol. 5 (2001), pp. 273–307.

been the reason for the decision of the party made after the events of October 1956 to allow moderate religiousness of its members on condition that it did not assume the form of organized activities in support of the Catholic Church and that it did not concern the party elite, i.e. its staunch activists²⁵. The crucial role of social appraisal in the light of the professed religion was evidenced in the sociological survey among the youth in the mid-1960s, when 35.5% of the respondents considered it impossible to marry a person of different faith, while nearly 30% of the inhabitants of Polish countryside approved of civil marriages. At the beginning of that decade, half of the respondents opted for some form of persuasion or obligation on the shackled up couples to force them to marriage²⁶.

The list of negative social phenomena complained about in a survey of the inhabitants of Warsaw conducted in the middle of the 1970s, half way through the decade of the rule of Edward Gierek, was topped by the promiscuity of the youth. The successively less concerning issues were alcoholism, 'social callousness', self-interest and nepotism (a.k.a. *kumoterstwo*, lit. cronyism), corruption (a.k.a. *łapownictwo* — bribery), 'bureaucratism' (i.e. excessive bureaucracy), greed and hooliganism²⁷. On the one hand, the respondents referred to the daily difficulties encountered by a citizen of People's Poland with running an official errand or buy necessities. On the other hand, some of the mentioned issues, such as callousness, greed and cronyism were condemned in the officially propagated though not practiced communist activist's ethics, but also in the doctrine of the Catholic Church.

Similar conclusions can also be drawn when reading denunciation letters sent by citizens to various party authorities and government institutions. The Office of Letters and Inspections²⁸ was established in

²⁵ Archiwum Państwowe w Gdańsku [APG], Komitet Wojewódzki PZPR w Gdańsku [KW PZPR], file 1824, *Informacja z narady aktywu partyjnego i służbowego wojewódzkiego aparatu MO w Gdańsku, poświęconej sprawom laicyzacji*, 11.05.1960, p.212.

²⁶ J. Kwaśniewski, *Spółeczeństwo wobec dewiacji*, Warszawa 1983, pp. 56–57.

²⁷ Ibidem, pp. 39–40.

²⁸ D. Jarosz, *Akta Biura Listów i Inspekcji KC PZPR jako źródło do badań rzeczywistości społecznej w Polsce w latach 1950–1956*, „Polska 1944/45–1989”, vol. 2 (1997), p. 192.

December 1948 as a department of the newly formed Polish United Workers' Party. The functions of the department were diverse. It was to receive correspondence from the low-ranking activists and ordinary people for the purposes of controlling the party apparatus and monitoring public feeling, as well as in order to give people a sense that the state authorities looked after their interests. Another important reason for establishing the Office was to legitimize squealing. The official approval for denunciation in the steering circles of PUWP was expressed explicitly in People's Poland at least twice — in the first half of the 1950s, and later during the anti-Jewish campaign in the years 1967–68. Collaboration with the secret police was not required to perform an act of denunciation. The social history of People's Poland, including the history of citizens' private lives during that period, provides evidence that denunciation was an occupation of a citizen who need not have been an informant. The majority of denunciation letters, both in the USSR and in People's Poland, were not addressed to the security service, but to party or government institutions. As a matter of fact, the strategy of denunciation in Poland had more similarities with the practice of sending supplications to the authorities and the letters of denunciation regarding other citizens which was propagated in Russia in the 1930s and described by Sheila Fitzpatrick²⁹.

The letters can be analyzed at least in two ways. They serve as the sources of information about the daily routines of various plants and households, a substantial evidence of the character of the invigilation of employees in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as a proof of the condition of morals in People's Poland. The majority of letters of denouncement were signed with the full name of the sender, although there was no institutional constraint to submit denunciations, same as in Russia in the 1930s. The purpose behind writing a denunciation was to distinguish oneself in front of the local or central authorities, hence the attempts at guessing which information will be considered the most incriminating for the target of the denunciation. Yet regardless of the controversy whether the majority of letters of denouncement were written so as to

²⁹ S. Fitzpatrick, *Supplicants and Citizens. Public Letter-Writing in Soviet Russia in the 1930s*, "Slavic Review" 1996, No. 1, pp. 78–105; S. Fitzpatrick, *Signals from Below. Soviet Letters of Denunciation of the 1930s*, "The Journal of Modern History" 1996, No. 4, pp. 831–866.

endear oneself to the addressee, or whether their purpose was to express author's beliefs, the correspondence seemed to reflect the hierarchy of values in the contemporary sphere of social conventions. It can be observed which types of behaviour or traits were commonly pointed out as the most embarrassing.

An analysis of the letters from citizens sent to the Voivodeship Committee of the PUWP in Gdańsk at the beginning of the Gierek's decade,³⁰ the issue which met with condemnation particularly often was leading an 'immoral' or 'bad' life, which was understood as having extramarital sex life, and more specifically sexual activity of women and love affairs involving men in managerial positions (such as the charge that someone 'dates women'). Such misconduct was seen in the context of 'breaking one's family'. Similar issues were touched upon in the letters of denouncement from the first half of the 1950s, as well as from the later period: there were no dissimilarities in terms of either qualitative or quantitative terms, though an estimate analysis may suggest the opposite:

Comrade Langer neglected his family and children and engaged in an immoral and riotous life with Majewska, which also had negative effect on his professional work, and he also had negative effect on the employees. It was also acknowledged that Majewska had led an immoral life even before she was employed as a personnel officer, which was known to Langer.

— said one of the letters³¹. The charge of unregulated sex life was equivalent to other charges concerning the lack of professional qualifications or overstepping one's authority:

He is an illiterate elementary school graduate who occupies the position of utility inspector and flirts with citizen Bielińska.

He found himself a lover, the manager of the shop no. 18, ... whom he takes away on business trips³².

³⁰ APG, KW PZPR, file 1455; ibidem, file 1456; ibidem, file 1457.

³¹ APG, KW PZPR, file 653, *Sprawozdanie z pracy Referatu Listów i Inspekcji KW PZPR w Gdańsku za okres od 1 maja do 1 czerwca 1954 r.*, p. 35.

³² APG, KW PZPR, file 13103, *Notatka służbowa z przeprowadzonej kontroli w Wydziale Rolnictwa i Leśnictwa PWRN — Wojewódzkiej Stacji Oceny Zwierząt w Gdańsku, 5 I 1963 r.*, pp. 9–10; ibidem file 10629, *Notatka dotycząca*

The term 'leading an immoral life' was also understood as characteristic of other types of behaviour, such as intemperance in drinking alcohol, excessive inclination towards entertainment and, less frequently, emphasizing one's wealth (the phenomena referred to in general as 'a riotous life'). Many letters criticized bad relationships at work; their authors pointed out drunkenness, thievery and fraud committed by clerical workers, abusing power, accepting bribes, stealing public property from a plant, nepotism and connections — the phenomena described widely by today's Polish historians³³ and usually reviled in the press from the period.

Some types of denunciation present in the 1950s vanished gradually throughout the 1960s and 1970s. The accusations of having 'improper class background' or 'blemish on reputation' were made only in exceptional cases, and the charges concerning religiousness were less and less frequent either. Bearing in mind the nation's religiousness declared at that time, one can formulate a hypothesis that it would be more hazardous to become condemned by one's neighbours and relatives due to not having baptized one's newborn baby than to face possible punitive measures at work or in the party for active involvement in the religious life. It was not practiced in Poland either during Stalinism or later to denounce one's relatives. The only cases which could evidence the opposite were letters of denouncement against an ex-husband intended to execute alimony or throw him out of the flat. The cases of domestic violence would also be described on exceptional occasions, with the offender's names given in the letters. Yet none of the above had any hallmarks of acting on ideological grounds. This undermines certain statements made by the historians and sociologists about the totalitarian character of the communist system in People's Poland. According

anonimu na dyrektora Wojewódzkiego Przedsiębiorstwa Handlu Meblami w Gdańsku, marzec 1970 r., p. 1.

³³D. Jarosz, M. Pasztor, *Afera mięsna. Fakty i konteksty*, Toruń 2004; K. Madej, *Siernieżna i dolarowa — korupcja w PRL w latach 1956–1980*. in: *PRL. Trwanie i zmiana*, ed. by D. Stola and M. Zaremba, Warszawa 2003, pp. 249–280; K. Kosiński, *Z historii pijaństwa w czasach PRL. „Peerełowskie” wzory picia alkoholu*, „Polska 1944/45–1989. Studia i materiały”, vol. 7 (2006), pp. 267–305.

to Fitzpatrick, even in the USSR in the time of the most dreadful terror Pavlik Morozov was more of an exception than a rule³⁴.

One of the fundamental challenges which a historian dealing with People's Poland must face is the problem of distinguishing between the assumptions and projects concerning social transformation from the contemporary cultural habits. Only some of the projects were implemented, and only some of them survived after the thaw in October 1956. In some cases particular elements of the proposed ethics were adopted with success. It can be concluded from the discussion provided above that the best acceptable elements of moral code in post-war Poland were those corresponding with the culture of workers or peasants, as well as those that were not at odds with what the churchgoers could hear during sermons. 'Intemperance in eating and drinking', vanity, greed, adultery — these sins were condemned in the orthodox ethics of Stalinist officers, as well as in the teachings of the Catholic Church. It also seems that many political decisions in People's Poland were made according to the dictates of conscience and the values inherited from one's background. This thesis is evidenced in the private accounts of the officers who attended church despite the recommendations of their superior party organization. Another proof of that is the state's inconsistent policy towards the institutions of the Catholic Church in Poland, the protracted withdrawal of religion classes from schools (which eventually took place in 1961), or the participation of party officials in religious celebrations in the second half of the 1940s, which should not be considered as practiced by the authorities for mere opportunistic purposes. By analogy, the social resistance was profiled not only politically, but also culturally. In other words, a range of resistance-oriented activities were also aimed at protecting the values and habits stemming from one's community.

The history of People's Poland saw various projects developed with regard to public morality, all of which featured the underlying inclination towards purifying the social tissue, separating the wheat from the chaff. The authorities made use of the hostility towards strangers shared by the majority of people inhabiting the territory of Poland after WWII and earlier, during the interwar period, an example of which was Polish anti-

³⁴ S. Fitzpatrick, *Signals from Below...*, p. 849.

-Semitism. The actions aimed at dividing the public sphere according to the category of purity were supported during Stalinism by a complex privacy-controlling apparatus. Such practices were limited in the successive years. The contemporary science was making certain efforts to meet the requirements of the order-generating practices in its attempts at describing the differences between the pathological and the healthy behaviour. All the contexts referred to above — the categories of purity vs. impurity, order vs. excessive social mobility, the ill who infected the healthy, the Manichean dichotomy in the space of the modern city, culture as opposed to nature, and finally normal behaviour as contrasted with pathologies and deviations — evidence the complexity and difficulties encountered by a researcher dealing with the latest history of People's Poland whose field of interests covers studying the public and private life during that period.

Wymiary ładu i patologii społecznej w PRL. Uwagi do badań na historię życia prywatnego i publicznego

Polscy historycy nadal zbyt łatwo zawierają praktykom dyskursywnym charakterystycznym dla badanej rzeczywistości historycznej, używając ich w roli pozornie neutralnego narzędzia historiograficznego opisu. Tymczasem społeczno-kulturowe konstruowanie pojęć takich jak „chuliganizm”, „homoseksualizm” czy wreszcie kluczowe dla autora artykułu pojęcie „patologii społecznej”, wymagają pogłębionej refleksji badawczej, tak na podstawie analizy języka ówczesnych mediów, jak wytworów instytucji państwowych czy nauki.

Zasadnicze pytania artykułu koncentrują się wokół metafory „czystości”, jako ważnego składnika dyskursu publicznego doby PRL. Autor zwracając uwagę na obecność w powojennej Polsce kilku projektów moralności publicznej, prezentuje konteksty społeczno-polityczne funkcjonowania kategorii „czystości” i „brudu”, ładu i nadmiernej ruchliwości społecznej. Podkreśla wyjątkową rolę metafory „epidemii” w refleksji na temat patologii społecznej, wskazuje na manichejski podział przestrzeni nowoczesnego miasta oraz zjawisko kontrastowania zachowań „normalnych” oraz „patologicznych” i „dewiacyjnych”.

Ordentlichkeit und gesellschaftlicher Missstand in der Volksrepublik Polen. Bemerkungen zu Forschungen nach der Geschichte des privaten und öffentlichen Lebens

Zu leicht vertrauen polnische Historiker den diskursiven, für die historische Wirklichkeit charakteristischen Praktiken, indem sie diese als ein scheinbar neutrales Mittel der historiografischen Beschreibung anwenden. Das gesellschaftlich-kulturelle Konstruieren der Begriffe wie „Randalieren“, „Homosexualität“ oder, „gesellschaftlicher Missstand“ das Schlüsselwort des Artikels erfordert dagegen eine vertiefte Reflexion der Forschung sowohl aufgrund der sprachlichen Analyse damaliger Medien als auch der Produkte öffentlicher Einrichtungen oder der Wissenschaft. Grundfragen des Artikels konzentrieren sich auf die Metapher der „Sauberkeit“ als den wichtigen Bestandteil des politischen Diskurses der Volksrepublik Polen. In Bezug auf ein paar Projekte der öffentlichen Moral im Nachkriegspolen präsentiert der Autor den gesellschaftlich-politischen Zusammenhang, in dem die Kategorien „Sauberkeit“ und „Schmutz“, Ordnung und gesellschaftliche Überbeweglichkeit funktionieren. In der Reflexion zum Thema gesellschaftlichen Missstandes wird die außergewöhnliche Rolle der Metapher der „Epidemie“ betont. Der Autor weist auf die manichäische Einteilung moderner Städte (Stadträume?) und das Phänomen des Kontrastes der „normalen“, „pathologischen“ und „abweichenden“ Verhaltensweisen hin.

Olga Gorbatcheva

Everyday life in the 19th century. Belarusian case

Growing interest in the history of daily life became a natural phenomenon in the context of positive changes in Belarusian historiography of early 1990's. Within the framework of national historical school "renaissance", the history of daily life was regarded as one of the promising research methods. The status of the history of daily life underwent significant changes with the emergence of specialised research, which accompanied a so-called "historical boom". Belarusian researchers of the history of daily life emphasise that the main subject of their investigations is not global historical events and great ideas, but the everyday life of ordinary people with all its varieties and peculiarities, including a person's inner life changes within the spatio-temporal continuum. Everyday life is manifested not as a totality of special and unique events, but also as a sequence of events repeated again and again.

Having accepted an anthropological method in historical research, historians can focus their attention on issues, which were considered insignificant within the framework of macro historical approaches. These are questions about the constituent parts of 19th century ordinary people's life in general and Belarusian women in particular; or which values determined the life of various social groups; or how society treated children; or which crimes dominated in society and how society imposed penalties upon criminals. 19th century peasant attitudes towards faith, holiness and to sorcery are one of the issues to be considered in the framework described above.

Putting emphasis on daily life, changing of the focus from great persons to ordinary people brings about the necessity of widening the range of sources. Representatives of lower classes practically did not

leave any records. Sources widely used by traditional historians are accounts about “minor people” compiled by others. For this reason, elements of material culture (clothes, nutrition, tools, etc.) and visual sources together with oral testimonies of the actors of history are to be studied extensively by historians of daily life.

Therefore, court records, including testimonies of and about common people, become the most representative sources of information. During the 19th century, numerous legal and court reforms were implemented in Belarus. This circumstance dictates the necessity to study documents from various judicial bodies specialising on criminal cases. From the late 18th century until 1831, criminal cases were under the competence of I Department Principal Courts¹. Later, up to 1867, these cases were in the competence of Criminal Chambers², which, after the reform of 1867, were united under the authority of Joint Criminal and Civil Court Chambers³. In 1883, instead of the Joint Chambers, a new body — Regional Courts that existed until 1918 — was introduced⁴.

The sphere of action of the Courts extended far beyond the bounds of their juridical assignments. The legal cases represent the people's sense of justice, their welfare, their ideas of fairness and morality, their attitudes to innocence, to illegitimates and to extramarital affairs, to tolerance and to religious rites, as well as relationships between Christian and pagan traditions.

While studying everyday life, it is possible to single out several main spheres. The first one is connected with the anthropological factor, which is related to a man as a living being. It includes birth, sexuality, illness, childhood and old age. The other one deals with man's vital functions: nourishment, clothing, dwelling, labour, leisure time. The

¹ National Historical Archive of Belarus (NHAB), f. 76, Minsk Principal Court of I Department.

² NHAB, f. 145, Minsk Criminal chamber the Ministry of Justice (1831–1867). The fund consists of two units (II unit: 1341 legal proceeding files).

³ NHAB, f. 147, Minsk united Chamber of Criminal and Civil Court the Ministry of Justice, 1867–1883 (IV unit: files of criminal contents).

⁴ NHAB, f. 183, Minsk Regional Court (1883–1918). II unit: 26392 files of criminal contents.

third sphere includes issues of survival in extreme situations — war, persecution, nature disasters, etc.

For 19th century Belarusians, belief in witchcraft and in different kinds of signs, e.g. the “evil eye” and the like, could be considered as one of the most important aspects connected with the birth-illness sphere. It was believed that there were people who had the power to make all sorts of incantations to place natural disasters and other forces under their control. People thought that with the help of such forces, it was possible to avoid disaster, to eject an “evil spirit”, to cure diseases, to achieve happiness and joy and vice versa — to create mischief, to cause death, illness, to call upon an evil spirit, to invite boredom, madness, fits, to ruin peace and harmony in a family and so on.

People possessing higher knowledge and able to do such things were called differently — sorcerers, wizards, witches (*charodei, charovniki, kolduny, znakhari, vorozhbity, ved'maki, ved'my, volkolaki*). According to the famous 19th century ethnographer A. Bogdanovich, these names corresponded to more ancient ones that had disappeared before the 19th c. — *kudesnik, volhv, veshchaya zhonka*⁵.

It was regarded that not every sorcerer was able to commit all the actions mentioned above; most of them possessed only one specific skill. One could cure and send out a disease, the other could bring about strife in a family, the third was able to cause hail or drought, the forth — to turn people into a wolf or frog. According to Belarusians' beliefs, one could become a sorcerer if he or she had been put within the bounds of his occupation in constant and close communication with some force of nature. For example, blacksmiths, millers, foresters, herdsmen, beekeepers, brewers, distillers of spirits were regarded as sorcerers⁶. That did not mean that people of other trades were not

⁵ А.Е. Богданович, *Пережитки древнего мирозерцания у белорусов. Этнографический очерк*, Гродно 1895, p. 133.

⁶ Cf. П.В. Шейн, *Материалы для изучения быта и языка русского населения Северо-Западного края*, в. III, *Описание жилища, одежды, пищи, занятий; препровождение времени, игры, верования, обычное право, чародейство, колдовство, знахарство, лечение болезней, средства от напастей, поверья, суеверия, приметы*, Санкт-Петербург 1902, p. 248; А.Е. Богданович, *Пережитки древнего мирозерцания у белорусов*, p. 134.

able to become sorcerers; but the sorcery of those mentioned above was, to some extent, more 'preferable'. It was considered that each of them knew the properties of the 'evil spirit' he dealt with while doing the job. Peasants believed that specific spirits lived in a smithy, mill, forest, cattle-yard. Belarusians had very strong superstitious fears of these spirits. Such a miller was in low regard if he did not know how to please a water spirit, or such a forester was not respected if he couldn't get along well with a forest spirit, or such a herdsman was blamed if he couldn't protect livestock from other animals by spells or to drive out a cowshed spirit. They were expected to be good craftsmen as well as able to use the power of spirits. Thus, millers from water mills could to 'take water', i.e. cast a spell on water, to cure or to send out diseases. Of course, nothing could prevent a miller to learn the craft of a fortune-teller, for example. A miller could be a werewolf and his wife could be a witch; but these skills were optional. Millers needed them to please a water spirit so that they always had the proper deal of water, so that a water spirit did not break a dam and did not damage the wheels of a mill, did not pull a mill down during high water — that was his concern. A miller had to learn all these tricks or give up his trade. A miller should also know how to place air elements under his control and, of course, know how to get on with the spirits of wind — whirlwind, storm and other air phenomena. He had to take everything into his consideration in order not to make the wind angry so that it calms down for a time; he had to know how to lull a storm when one had to mill, to conciliate a storm so that it wouldn't break the sails⁷. Therefore, everyone dealing with mysterious, wilful natural forces ought to be a skilful master.

It is difficult to find out now what kinds of sacrifices were offered to 'evil spirits' by different craftsmen. However, according to the testimony of the miller Grigory Poretsky from the village from the Kholopovichy Borisov district (*uezd*), Minsk province (*gubernija*), an experienced miller always put a piece of lard under a wheel with the coming of the first frosts in autumn, when water was covered with thin ice, in order to prevent the wheel creaking. When a pig was slaughtered, a miller had not contend himself with one piece only, sacrificing for these matters

⁷ П.В. Шейн, *Материалы для изучения быта и языка русского населения Северо-Западного края*, в. III, p. 249.

a good deal of pork. However, it did not guarantee further success in the miller's work. As G. Poretsky described, some millers could limit themselves with less substantial gifts, e.g. pork intestines covered with fat. Such a miller's deeds could be explained by the following reasons: if a miller did not offer a sacrifice to a water spirit, a miller would not be able to keep the wheels in order, and a water spirit would always lick the grease from them⁸.

A forester had to learn how to propitiate his evil spirit, which could provoke a dangerous beast that was able to wound or attack him. To prevent this, he needed to commit a ritual of sacrifice, offering some parts of the forester's body — cut off the little finger, nails, hair, etc. In the 19th century, this custom had already been changed. During the Day of Annunciation, a forester went into the wood, where he pronounced spells and left a peace of bread with salt and a lock of his hair. Hair could be replaced by nails.⁹

Belarusians did not regard cases of professional sorcery as reprehensible if they did not exceed certain bounds. On the contrary, the majority perceived them as a manifestation of the deepest professional knowledge, indispensable for success.¹⁰

According to folk beliefs, the desire to charm somebody arose spontaneously, involuntarily, unconsciously. A sorcerer started to act when 'blood covers his eyes' and when 'evil comes into his head' — these were common folk forms to express and to describe the ecstasy of a sorcerer. Being in such a state of mind, the sorcerer could charm somebody. In such a case, peasants preferred to keep out of his sight.

People usually paid honour to sorcerers, but in most cases, this honour was not sincere. During family celebrations, weddings, baptisms, a sorcerer was given the most honourable place; he was paid extreme

⁸ About professional miller's witchcraft vide: П.В. Шейн, *Материалы для изучения быта и языка русского населения Северо-Западного края*, в. III, р. 249; А. Е. Богданович, *Пережитки древнего миросозерцания у белорусов*, pp. 134–136.

⁹ А. Богданович gives variants of spells that were used by Belarusian foresters in the 19 c., А. Е. Богданович, *Пережитки древнего миросозерцания у белорусов*, pp. 136–139.

¹⁰ П.В. Шейн, *Материалы для изучения быта и языка русского населения Северо-Западного края*, в. III, р. 250.

attention and treated best of all in order not to make him angry, and therefore, to not bring harm to the newly married or baby's happiness. A sorcerer received such treatment as natural and well deserved, and he easily threatened both hosts and guests. "Why, you'll remember me! I'll get you in darkness!" — an enraged sorcerer used to say in such cases¹¹. In such a situation, everyone present was captured with fear, while those who made a sorcerer angry tried to prevent or to destroy his magic with the help of another sorcerer.

Such an incident with the Davydkov brothers and Vasily Kovalevsky took place in the Rechitsa district in January 1866¹². Leon Davydkov (26 years old) visited Ivan Grebenchuk sister's wedding and drank "the glass of vodka poured from the bottle and unaware of anything ... as vodka had a natural colour and taste."¹³ This vodka was offered to him by Vasily Kovalevsky. Right then, Leon Davydkov felt queasy and was so weak that he was not able to go home. Then the host, I. Grebenchuk, hauled him up onto a cart and took him home. After the victim had been brought home, his relatives found out that the reason for Leon's poor condition was his contact with Kovalevsky, who was known among the villagers as a witch man (sorcerer). This is why they decided to appeal to Kovalevsky for help¹⁴. The behaviour of the sick Leon resembled temporary madness: "He ate burning pieces of coal, fought with a wall, etc."¹⁵

When Leon's relatives came to Kovalevsky, the latter said, "I was almost sure I would be called for," and added that Leon "will suffer a little, not more than day and night."¹⁶ Having arrived at the Davydkov house, Kovalevsky asked for vodka and consecrated salt. When everything was given to him, Kovalevsky poured the vodka into a glass, added salt

¹¹ Ibidem.

¹² The case "of accusing Rechitsa citizen V. Kovalevsky in sorcery and citizens the Davydkovs in beating him" was examined by Rechitsa court since 25.01.1866 till 17.03.1867. V.: NHAB, f. 145, un. 2, f. 1203.

¹³ Ibidem, p. 7.

¹⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 9.

¹⁶ Ibidem.

and whispered something. Then he gave the prepared mixture to Davydkov, blew at Davydkov three times and said: "Now you'll recover."¹⁷

After the treatment, Davydkov felt himself get better immediately. Then a reception for the sorcerer was organised. However, during the reception, Leon's brother Grigory started to reproach Kovalevsky about the damage he had done to his brother. Whilst hearing this, the sorcerer answered: "You shouldn't reproach me, or I'll do to you the same, and you'll perish after that." During the conversation, Kovalevsky also added that the vodka drunk by Davydkov had been prepared for the newly married to "make them suffer as he suffered. But since Davydkov appeared first before his eyes, it was given to him."¹⁸ The brothers, who, as documents relate, had violent characters, couldn't stand it and beat him unmercifully for his words.

The Criminal Chamber found Leon and Grigory Davydenko guilty of beating the 53-year-old citizen Vasily Kovalevsky. Kovalevsky himself was accused of preparing and giving a drink with a harmful effect to the condition of the citizen Leon Davydenko and providing help by means of that drink. Such an action was perceived "in the eyes of common and gullible people as a kind of sorcery, witchcraft, etc." The criminal statute (article № 935) provided imprisonment for a term from 7 days to 3 months for those accused for the first time. If there was evidence that "consumption of drinks, mixtures and other means might have a harmful effect on health", a guilty person could be put into prison for a term from 8 months to 1 year and 4 months (article № 50)¹⁹. Accused of actions of "magic", Kovalevsky was put into prison for 3 months²⁰.

In the 19th century, the 'zalom' incantation was widely spread among people engaged in land cultivation. 'zalom' was regarded as the most dangerous manifestation of sorcery. The process of making 'zalom' consisted of tying rye knots and including the name of the person 'zalom' is intended to affect along with enumeration of the sufferings this person should undergo or what death he should experience²¹. 'zaloms'

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 8.

¹⁹ Ibidem, pp. 12–13.

²⁰ Ibidem, p. 13.

²¹ Cf. A.E. Богданович, *Пережитки древнего мировоззрения у белорусов*, p. 170.

were made both for people and for domestic animals to bring disease or death upon them. If reapers found knots in rye whilst harvesting grain, they did not touch them, but carefully reaped around them, protecting themselves from 'zalom' spells. It was regarded that only a skilful sorcerer or sorceress could destroy the magic power of the 'zalom', and thus protect people from the impending danger in whose field the 'zalom' was made.

Many examples of spreading the belief about 'zalom' within the territory of Belarus in the 19th century are left. A. Serzhputovski described some peculiarities of this belief in the Polesye region. Here, people thought that a 'zalom' was made by a naked sorcerer or witch in a field in order to bring evil upon a hostile person. A sorcerer in a "field of that person gathers rye wheat or another grain in the sorcerer's fist, twists the ears together, binds them with hair mixed with a coarse or felt thread or with tape or with something else, casting all sorts of spells upon the heads of a host, hostess or the entire family or house or livestock — upon everything he wants to make the 'zalom'. Then he breaks and rumples these ears. In such way, the person for whom it was intended would be broken and rumped. If such a 'zalom' or doll are only found in a field, the frightened people rush to seek a mighty sorcerer."²² Peasants thought that only a mightier sorcerer could protect them against this witchcraft. It is important to note that peasants appealed to priests rarely in such cases. Peasants from Polesye held the opinion that God could not help in such a struggle against these dark forces.

At the same time, certain ways of resisting a 'zalom' were developed by peasants. If a 'zalom' was found, it was recommended to do the following: "to put an aspen felled from the east on the 'zalom', to surround it with some manure and set everything on fire. These means will lead you to the field of the person who made that 'zalom'. You should not do anything he asks. You should also keep an eye out as to not let him take a handful of ground from the owner's field, because it may cause harm in the future."²³

²² А.К. Сержпутоўскі, *Прымхі і забабоны беларусаў-палешукоў*, Мінск 1998, p. 265

²³ П.В. Шейн, *Материалы для изучения быта и языка русского населения Северо-Западного края*, в. III, pp. 485–486.

A Kopatkevichy *volost* (Mozyr district, Minsk province) clerk is also of great interest within the framework of the given study. "A *zalom* is made in a field with growing grain or grass in the form of a band to cause a man's or animal's death or disease. A mean person (an enemy — sorcerer) makes it. To avoid the threat, the crop or hayfield owner usually asks for help from a sorcerer; generally from the peasants. My correspondent once fell ill because of a 'zalom' made in her family field. She told me the following: a sorcerer took a headscarf from her head and went to bed, putting it under his head. The next day, early in the morning, he said who had made the 'zalom'. Then he ordered her to bring a bottle with water and to pray to icons, holding it in her hands and all the time crying in it. After that, he gave her water from that bottle to drink and, supposedly, thanks to this, she recovered. The sorcerer also pulled out a 'zalom' and, having tied it to a stone, threw it into water. Quite often, sorcerers put a 'zalom' into a coffin. In the first case, the person who had made the 'zalom' had to drown; in the second one — to die of a sudden, natural death."²⁴

However, sometimes a "zalom's" existence was doubted. For example, the priest Dmitry Pashika from the village of Petrokovo (Mozyr district, Minsk province) had the following attitude to this kind of witchcraft: "The belief in so-called 'zaloms', which are found by peasants in fields sown mainly with rye, is widely spread. A 'zalom' consists of several rye stems put together and skilfully interwoven. It is made by an evil person to cause damage to the household of the person he hates and to deprive him of prosperity, since common people think that those who will reap the 'zalom' should inevitably fall ill or die, and an animal which will eat the straw from a 'zalom' should perish. Everybody knows that 'zaloms' are really found in fields, and it is true that they cause some kind of damage. Nevertheless, the evil caused by a 'zalom' can be easily explained: if one neighbour, for example, is furious with another one, he goes and makes some 'zaloms' on the crops of his foe without any sorcerer's tricks or whispering, only keeping in his head that his enemy, by all means, will go to seek a sorcerer. The person that has a 'zalom' placed on him actually leaves in search of a sorcerer, sometimes for dozens of miles, at the time of heavy work in the fields, when a peasant

²⁴ Ibidem, pp. 232–233.

has no time to spare. The sorcerer then had to be supported for some days, plied with vodka and regaled as the dearest guest and paid some roubles upon his departure. Of course, all these things are connected with heavy losses and wasting of valuable time, so the damage caused by a 'zalom' is obvious. We should suppose that a 'zalom' is made by peasants who have no faith in it and in a sorcerer's power — a kind of sceptic²⁵.

From N. Nikoforovsky's records about the belief in the 'zalom' among peasants of the Vitebsk province in the last quarter of the 19th century, one can see the connection of the 'zalom' with an evil spirit and the devil's tricks. According to local peasant ideas, one should seek a priest's help and not for other sorcerers' spells to break the magic of the creator of the 'zalom' (which is called here the villain): "Let's go to the priest. Our priest will break any 'zalom'. He sticks in sorcerers' throats."²⁶

In the second half of the 19th century, some people had doubts about the existence of the belief in the 'zalom'. However, this tendency was still observed in some cases in the peasants' milieu. There were examples when this belief was used by people to earn a living. An investigation of the sorcerer Fedor Vorobey's case that took place in the Rechitsa provincial court in November 1859 represents a good example of this tendency²⁷.

A peasant named Fedor, the son of Sava Vorobey, who lived in a state village Glinnaya Sloboda (Rechitsa district, Minsk province), practiced sorcery through interpreting the behaviour of snakes, dogs and frogs. Evtuch Maloshchenko, a soldier who came home on a short leave, found a 'zalom' in his rye. "When hearing peasant gossip that a 'zalom' made in one's grain is a bad portent for the owner and that it mustn't be pulled out by oneself, as you can cause harm to your health or life"²⁸, the soldier invited Fedor Vorobey to break the witchcraft. The peasant-sorcerer was offered four "garnets" of rye as a reward²⁹.

Fedor Vorobey went to the field and performed the rite to get rid of the 'zalom' in the rye. The sorcerer went around that 'zalom' 3 times,

²⁵ Ibidem, pp. 231–232.

²⁶ Ibidem, p. 233.

²⁷ NHAB, f. 145, un. 2, f. 685.

²⁸ Ibidem, p. 3.

²⁹ Measure for corn (about 3 quarts).

pulled it out and crossing it three times with his little finger and buried it.”³⁰ After that, using his secret knowledge, he accused Katherine Danilova, a peasant, of making the ‘zalom’ to bring death to the soldier Evtuch Maloshchenko’s family. As he testified during investigation, he had come to this conclusion through interpretation of his dream. He dreamt that a frog, snake and dog crept from the soldier Evtuch Maloshchenko’s yard, and all together they had thrown themselves at Evtuch Maloshchenko’s wife Fedora and her child, and they had even bitten them. Apparently, this dog and snake were sent by Evtuch’s brother’s wife Katherine Maloshchenko.”³¹

K. Maloshchenko, a peasant, completely denied her guilt, and maintained “that she had not made any ‘zalom’ to bring death to the family, that she did not know any sorcery and that she had no malice to either Evtuch nor to his family, and that the evidence was fabricated by the peasant Vorobey.”³² Further examination of the case led to the accusation of the sorcerer himself. The process of the examination of nine peasants’ evidence revealed the real motives behind F. Vorobey’s behaviour. All the peasants spoke of him as a liar, a careless and lazy household keeper who makes his living through false sorcery. As a result, the court sentenced 52-year-old Fedor Vorobey to punishment in the form of 50 blows from a birch branch and (to cleanse his conscience) penance in accordance with the Orthodox faith³³.

It is worth mentioning that belief in the ‘zalom’ existed mainly among peasants and those engaged in land cultivation. Peasants maintained that in cases when an educated person pulled out a ‘zalom’, he would not be affected by traditional retaliation. As Bogdanovich points out, peasants believed that cultured and educated people were able to resist a sorcerer’s witchcraft. There are some examples when educated people were treated as sorcerers³⁴.

Witch doctors, unlike sorcerers, enjoyed sincere honour and respect among the common people and held a special place in their life. Attrib-

³⁰ NHAB, f. 145, un. 2, f. 685, p. 3.

³¹ Ibidem, p. 3.

³² Ibidem, p. 4.

³³ Ibidem, p. 6.

³⁴ А. Е. Богданович, *Пережитки древнего мирозерцания у белорусов*, p. 170.

uting the origins of all diseases to spells or evil eyes, peasants believed that it was possible to get rid of them with the help of witch doctors rather than medical men. It was considered that all external diseases could be treated through casting spells, whilst internal ones could be cured with the help of magic water³⁵. At the same time witch doctors possessed some practical skills for treatment of dislocations, broken bones, spine curvature, etc³⁶.

Belarusians also perceived clairvoyants as doctors. A. Kirkor describes one such woman from the Oshmiany district, Vilnya province: "Under fits of clairvoyance, she undergoes an intentional or actual strong convulsion, and she recognises every visitor with closed eyes, guesses his disease, prescribes treatment, which usually includes herbs and plants, and what is more, she recommends ordering some liturgies and services, imposes fasting and so on. For some, she gives a lecture on morality and gives advice to improve morality."³⁷

Medicine made up of three parts (warmed up wine with clay, chalk, pepper and a dash of butter) was the most common treatment prescribed by witch doctors in the Vilnya and Grodno provinces. Herb liqueurs were another popular treatment. In the process of treatment, spells were also used. For example, one young man hurt his hand badly in the Lida district. A witch doctors from the village of Stuchiki discovered that three different illnesses caused it and started treatment. "After sunset, she took some ears of rye, tied them together and put them into the hand and began pouring warm water over it, explaining that it was meant to pour out the hairy illness³⁸. Then she burnt three splinters, and pieces of their coal were divided into three equal parts. After that, she took some pieces of coal from one part, brought them to a high temperature and started to fiddle with them over the hand, not

³⁵ П.В. Шейн, *Материалы для изучения быта и языка русского населения Северо-Западного края*, в. III, р. 14.

³⁶ This evidences are given by P. Shein on the grounds of A. Bogdanovich's manuscripts, which were purchased by Shein in 80-th years of the XIX c. П.В. Шейн, *Материалы для изучения быта и языка русского населения Северо-Западного края*, в. III, р. 251.

³⁷ А. Киркор, *Этнографический взгляд на Виленскую губернию*, р. 164.

³⁸ A disease connected with hair falling out the skin, which led to boil formation.

touching it and whispering something. Then she threw them into the water and took cold pieces of coal from the second part and then from the third one and fiddled with them again and threw them into the water. According to her words, this course of treatment was to drive out the fiery illness.”³⁹ Later, the woman held an appropriate rite for the third disease. After that, she repeated the entire course of treatment twice — before dawn and after sunset. As Kirkor reports, after the third rite, some liquid ran out of the uncovered wound, and after that, he recovered completely⁴⁰.

The writings of ethnographers include numerous records of restoring health. It must be noticed that in the process of treatment, all sorts of natural medicines were used. This was just another approach in healing epidemic diseases that caused great mortality.

Among the peasantry, one of the most dangerous diseases was considered to be cholera. In order to prevent it, peasants appealed to the Church first. If an epidemic occurred, peasants gathered money to order a liturgy at the local church. Then they walked across the village and fields carrying crosses while the church bells were ringing. If they did not manage to walk around the affected territory in one day, they resumed the procession the next day. After that, the peasants returned to the village, where tables covered with clean cloths with bread and salt on them were placed nearby in every yard. The village street was covered with white sackcloth, and a priest in vestment trod on it. After the end of the religious procession and a public prayer, all went into the church⁴¹.

At the same time, numerous popular beliefs about other ways of preventing this mortal disease existed. For example, in the Grodno province, people believed that to avoid cholera, one should weave a pure flax towel and put it up at the local church before sunrise. In addition, consecrated crosses of untreated wood were erected at the crossroads.

³⁹ Skin rash.

⁴⁰ А. Киркор, *Этнографический взгляд на Виленскую губернию*, pp. 164–165.

⁴¹ П.В. Шейн, *Материалы для изучения быта и языка русского населения Северо-Западного края*, в. III, pp. 291–292.

To stop an epidemic, protective circles were created. This custom was spread both throughout central Belarus and in Polesye. Two young, white oxen were chosen and harnessed to a wooden plough. A furrow was ploughed round the village. This procedure should be carried out by twins; one of them performing as the ploughman, the other as the ox driver. At the same time, according to a local clerk, S. Prokulevich, from the village of Moiseevschina (Borisov district, Minsk province), there was another version of this custom. It was carried out by women. "Young and old women gather outside the village and there, stripped bare, take a wooden plough and harness the youngest among them to it. Then, all together, singing magic songs and spells to scare off the epidemic, they plough a furrow round their village."⁴²

In addition to the means of protection described above, there were some 19th century rituals which could be explained only in the framework of archaic and medieval stereotypes. For example, the Novogrudok provincial court examined a case dated August 1855⁴³. Luka Man'ko, a 70-year-old peasant woman from the village of Okonovichy (Novogrudok district, Grodno province) was buried alive together with another two villagers who died of cholera⁴⁴. Peasants carrying people who died from cholera to the local cemetery accidentally met L. Man'ko. They "forced her to go with them and, having the prejudice that through this they could stop cholera, buried her with the bodies mentioned above in one pit prepared at the cemetery."⁴⁵ A local medical assistant, a peasant named Andrey Kozakevich, was the initiator of this brutal action.

⁴² Given ways of withstanding cholera spreading are described by P. Shein and A. Serzhputovski. V: П.В. Шейн, *Материалы для изучения быта и языка русского населения Северо-Западного края*, v. III, pp. 292–293; A. К. Сержпутоўскі, *Прымхі і забавоны беларусаў-палешукоў*, p. 292.

⁴³ ННАВ, f. 145, un. 2, f. 458, *The case of accusing peasants of the village Okonovichy Novogrudok district in burying alive together with bodies of people died of cholera the peasant L. Manko with superstitious mean to stop cholera epidemic (1855.08.15—1864.10.15)*.

⁴⁴ Peasants regarded a victim woman as a cholera carrier. As A. Serzhputovski describes, it was a belief in Polesye that cholera comes in an appearance of an old woman. V.: А.К. Сержпутоўскі, *Прымхі і забавоны беларусаў-палешукоў*, p. 291.

⁴⁵ ННАВ, f. 145, un. 2, f. 458, p. 16.

He pushed Man'ko into the pit and started filling it up with earth⁴⁶. His behaviour was based on the conviction that in such a way, it would be possible to prevent the further spread of the ailment⁴⁷. In some regions of Belarus, in the Borisov district of the Minsk province (village of Moiseevschina) in particular, another variant of this ritual was widely practiced. People buried a black cock dressed in items of men's clothing⁴⁸. At the same time, in Polesye, there was a belief that the first man who fell ill with cholera had to be buried alive⁴⁹.

There are records of some more archaic rites in Belarus. On August 9, 1848, peasants from Big Zhukhovichy (Novogrudok district, Grodno province) hollowed out the grave of the peasant Yustina Yushkova, who died of cholera in July, in order to stop the epidemic⁵⁰. Rubtsov, the local retired medical attendant, tried to convince the people that she "who died first, being pregnant, and who lived a dissolute life" was the cause of spreading the epidemic. He encouraged the peasants to exhume the dead woman and to examine the position of her unborn baby and to check if her mouth was opened⁵¹. Volunteers hollowed out the grave, took the body out, cut the belly of the dead woman open with a scythe to examine the baby, and after sticking an aspen stake into her open mouth, buried her again⁵². After that, they expected the epidemic to cease.

According to Law Code, peasants guilty of exhumation might be deprived of all rights, punished by 10–20 lashes from a whip and exiled to Siberia⁵³. But instead, taking into account their sincere confession, delusions and the medical assistant Rubtsov's instigations, 90-year-old Nikita Gireyko was banished into a monastery for one year, and the other 11 peasants were punished with 10–16 lashes⁵⁴.

⁴⁶ Ibidem, p. 75.

⁴⁷ Ibidem, p. 12.

⁴⁸ П.В. Шейн, *Материалы для изучения быта и языка русского населения Северо-Западного края*, в. III, p. 293.

⁴⁹ А.К. Сержпутоўскі, *Прымхі і забабоны беларусаў-палешукоў*, p. 292.

⁵⁰ NHAB, f. 145, un. 2, f. 311, p. 13.

⁵¹ Ibidem, p. 15.

⁵² Ibidem, p. 13, 16.

⁵³ Ibidem, p. 17.

⁵⁴ Ibidem, pp. 17–19.

Feasts and celebrations were a very important component of peasant life. These celebrations were closely connected with Christian traditions. In addition, in spite of growing scepticism towards religious issues in the 19th century, breaking feast rituals was regarded as the greatest sin among the peasantry. Annual rituals were a cornerstone of the traditional philosophy of life and supported its continuity. Those peasants who worked on festive days, especially during Christian celebrations, were blamed for breaking the rules. In the Vilnya, Grodno and Minsk provinces, beliefs about turning those who worked on holidays into stone were widely spread. As one legend says, one can see such stones near the Kurzhenets borough by Vileyka, in the Iosifovo estate, Lida district, outside the Smorgon borough in the Oshmianny district. In a Lozovichy farm near Nesvizh (Slutsk district), there are three giant stones. One of them resembles a statue and is perceived as a ploughman who decided to plough at Christmas, whilst two others represent the oxen helping him to do it⁵⁵.

In the 19th century, some important changes concerning attitudes towards Christian churches occurred. Court documents include numerous records of church robberies. These robberies were committed by representatives of different social groups (peasants, nobility, clergymen) and by different churches (Uniate, Catholic and Orthodox). For example, in 1835, Josef Elyashevich, a 27-year-old deacon, was accused of the theft of different things from a Uniate church in the Tumilovichy borough (Borisov district, Minsk province). Being in the service in this church, Elyashevich stole some pieces of fabric from donations. As the deacon explained himself, this crime was committed because of complete poverty. I and family for shirts and other household needs" used the stolen fabric.⁵⁶ In 1838, Klementy Bogdanovich, an 18-year-old peasant, took nearly five pounds of wax from the Uniate church in the village of Podyevichy (Igumen district, Minsk province)⁵⁷.

Concepts of innocence and virginity played an important role in traditional peasant life. According to A. Kirkor's observations, peasants of the Vilnya province endowed these qualities with an aura of holiness.

⁵⁵ А. Киркор, *Этнографический взгляд на Виленскую губернию*, pp. 179–180.

⁵⁶ NHAB, f. 145, un. 2, f. 97, p. 24.

⁵⁷ NHAB, f. 145, un. 2, f. 143, p. 37.

They believed that an innocent girl coming into a husband's house brought God's blessing with herself. Belarusians perceived chastity as a token of further prosperity and happiness. Opposite to this, a girl who had transgressed before marriage became the object of everybody's condemnation. She received severe treatment from her mother-in-law, husband's sisters and other female kin. Such a wife could not be helped by fortune that is more significant or by her husband's intercession. There was a belief that by being a wife, she would not bring happiness and peace to the husband's house. On the contrary, strife and all sorts of troubles will come with her to the new family. To a certain degree, these circumstances influenced changes of wedding rituals for such girls. In particular, it was forbidden to sing many traditional festive songs that were the basis of a wedding ceremony at such weddings⁵⁸.

The perception of morality in the countryside, as well as in urban areas, conformed to the norms of Christianity and, to a certain degree, with traditional stereotypes. This meant that the Church was a guardian of moral norms and values, responsible for due punishment to those who broke the norms. A community's censure also played an important role in this context.

Women having illegitimate children were objects of severe hostility in communities. P. Shein described an incident that happened in 1847 in Lash (Vilnya province). A local priest put "...a wreath plaited from pea straw with a tail 21 feet long twisted together" on the head of a peasant woman who gave birth to an illegitimate child and "... ordered her to walk three times round the church and then to fasten herself to a tree..." The girl was kept for three hours in such a position⁵⁹. The ethnographer emphasises that such punishments were widely used by priests in the Vilnya region. However, even after punishment, the sinner could not regain her lost position.

This attitude to sinners led to serious consequences. Minsk Criminal Chamber archives dating from 1831 to 1867 provide solid proof of this. From 134 files of a second inventory of the find mentioned above, more than 125 files are connected with different forms of the brutal treatment

⁵⁸ А. Киркор, *Этнографический взгляд на Виленскую губернию*, p. 149.

⁵⁹ П.В. Шейн, *Материалы для изучения быта и языка русского населения Северо-Западного края*, v. III, pp. 90–91.

of those with illegitimate children⁶⁰. It should be noticed that such an attitude to those with illegitimate children did not depend on the woman's social status. One can encounter here cases of average citizens, nobility and peasants. Women were even not afraid of further punishment that provided for this kind of crime whipping followed by exile to hard labour⁶¹.

There are many examples proving that economic reasons or strict legislation were not the major reasons for the severe treatment of the illegitimate children, but the fear of losing one's social status and everybody's condemnation. For example, Matryena Karaseva, a 35-year-old Orthodox widowed peasant from the village of Karasi (Disna district, Minsk province) did not regard her behaviour as something beyond certain bounds. However, she took up the act of pregnancy and the birth of an illegitimate child in an absolutely different manner. As the peasant explained herself, "being ashamed of what her neighbours and all the members of her family might think", she gave birth to the baby in a cowshed secretly and then hid the baby in straw⁶².

A feeling of shame and fear of persecution from brother's side made Felitsiana Lunkevich, a 20-year-old noblewoman from the town of Vileika (Minsk province) conceal her pregnancy, and, after giving birth to a stillborn child, hide him in a cellar⁶³. Eva Martinovich, a Catholic recruit's wife from Petrovichi (Vileika district, Minsk province) was guided by similar motives. Having an extramarital affair with a local peasant, she gave birth to a child. But being afraid of everybody's condemnation, she hid him by a riverbank⁶⁴.

The description of the main spheres of a Belarusian peasant's life in the 19th century presented above, based on ethnographers' records and courts proceedings, shows in what ways people consciously maintained patriarchal beliefs. The traditional consciousness of Belarusian peasants in the 19th century remained within the bounds of medieval stereotypes and beliefs in miracles, omens and symbolism and acted as a kind of resistance to the novelties of the surrounding world brought

⁶⁰ NHAB, f. 145, un. 2.

⁶¹ NHAB, f. 145, un. 2, f. 204, pp. 2–3.

⁶² NHAB, f. 145, un. 2, f. 205, p. 2.

⁶³ This case took place in April 1838. v.: NHAB, f. 145, un. 2, f. 134, p. 83.

⁶⁴ NHAB, f. 145, un. 2, f. 204, pp. 5–9.

about by the new epoch. Traditional ways of life and thinking, which had been created and maintained by the lower classes throughout the centuries, were based on traditional conventions and served as a shield protecting the peasant from the greatest evil that could catch up them.

In the 19th century, peasants' (especially Orthodox peasants') perceptions of the world were based on a combination of interweaving and confronting pagan and Christian stereotypes. A peasant's attitude towards faith and holiness was ambivalent. On the one hand, a Christian outlook and values constituted the main moral imperative of a Belarusian peasant's life. On the other hand, one could frequently observe cases of a disrespectful attitude towards saints in peasant communities. The existence of numerous fairy tales where saints were accused of theft and other crimes is further proof of this.

Życie codzienne w XIX wieku. Przypadek białoruski

Konsekwencją zmian w historiografii białoruskiej, które dokonały się u progu lat 90-tych XX wieku, był wzrost zainteresowania historią życia codziennego. W ramach przeżywającej odrodzenie narodowej szkoły historycznej, historia codzienności uważana była za jedną z najbardziej obiecujących metod badawczych. Tym samym do rangi istotnego zagadnienia urósł problem życia chłopów w XIX wieku, w tym wartości determinujących jego codzienne wybory, miejsca dziecka we wspólnocie czy metod dyscyplinowania i karania. Prezentowany artykuł koncentruje się na stosunku chłopów do wiary, świętości i magii, dowodząc ambiwalentnego stosunku mieszkańców wsi białoruskich do sacrum. Badania takie wymagają znacznego rozszerzenia bazy źródłowej. Autorka wykorzystała przede wszystkim archiwalia instytucji sądowych istniejących na Białorusi w XIX wieku, koncentrując swą uwagę na sprawach kryminalnych.

Das Alltagsleben im 19. Jahrhundert. Der weißrussische Fall

Die Folge der Veränderungen in der weißrussischen Historiografie, die sich an der Schwelle der 90er Jahre des 20. Jahrhunderts vollzogen haben, war das steigende Interesse an der Geschichte des Alltagslebens. Im Rahmen der sich wiederbelebenden historischen Nationalschule galt die Alltagsgeschichte als eine der vielversprechendsten

Forschungsmethoden. Zu einer bedeutenden Frage wurde somit das Leben der Bauern im 19. Jahrhundert und insbesondere die Werte, die ihre alltäglichen Entscheidungen determiniert haben, die Stellung der Kinder in der Gemeinschaft, die Strafmethoden und die Disziplin. Die Autorin dieses Artikels konzentriert sich auf das Verhältnis der Bauern zu dem Glauben, der Heiligkeit und der Magie und beweist das ambivalente Verhältnis der Dorfbewohner zum *Sacrum*. Solche Forschungen verlangen eine erhebliche Erweiterung der Quellenbasis. Die Autorin benutzte vor allem die Archivalien unterschiedlicher Gerichtsinstitutionen im 19. Jahrhundert in Weißrussland und legt den Fokus auf Kriminalfälle.

Heidi Hein-Kircher

The influence of political myth on historical consciousness and identity as factors of mentality

In the 1980s an 'old' hero had his 'revival' within Polish society: the former leader of the authoritarian 'Sanacja-regime' in the interwar period, Marshal Józef Piłsudski, was used as an instrument of opposition by the *Solidarność* because he was seen not only as the builder of the democratic Polish republic after 1918, but also as the hero who defeated the Soviet-Russian army in 1920. Both interpretations are a result of the myth of Piłsudski, which survived in Polish society after World War II and which presents even today his way of acting as democratic and anti-Russian. After the fall of the communist regime in 1989, it was the medium to build up a „new” Polish identity. This is a result of the „elastic” way a myth interprets history and influences identity. Therefore political myths have impact on mentality.

To show how political myths influence societies, I will firstly define mentality, identity, and (historical) memory resp. consciousness. Then I can define political myths and show how they are spread and which concrete functions they have for a society. These reflections on political myths, especially on their functions, are based for the most part on the theoretical considerations of Benedict Anderson's „imagined communities”¹, Eric Hobsbawm's and Terence Ranger's „invention of

¹ B. Anderson, *Die Erfindung der Nation. Zur Karriere eines folgenreichen Konzepts*, Frankfurt a.M., New York 1996.

tradition”² as well as Jan³ and Aleida⁴ Assmann’s studies on cultural memory, whereby the literature about political symbols and rituals as well as political cults helps us to consider the forms of communicating myths and their forms of expression. Finally I include my own studies on political myths⁵ — especially the Piłsudski-cult⁶ and the myth of Poland as *antemurale christianitatis*⁷.

1. Mentality — identity — (historical) memory

Mentality is on the one hand defined by the dominating conceived ideas and mental structure of an epoch. On the other hand, it includes psychological factors, the unconscious and semi-conscious motives that have impacts on social patterns of action and cultural modes of expression. It is thus a „heterogeneous ensemble of cognitive and intellectual

² *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. by E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, Cambridge 2003.

³ J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, München 1997.

⁴ A. Assmann, *Funktionsgedächtnis und Speichergedächtnis — zwei Modi der Erinnerung*, in: *Generation und Gedächtnis. Erinnerungen und kollektive Identitäten*, ed. by K. Platt, M. Dabag, Opladen 1995, pp. 169–185.

⁵ H. Hein-Kircher, *Überlegungen zu einer Typologisierung von politischen Mythen aus historiographischer Perspektive — ein Versuch*, in: *Politische Mythen. Perspektiven historischer Mythosforschung*, ed. H. Henning Hahn, H. Hein, Marburg 2006, pp. 407–426; H. Hein, *Historische Mythos- und Kultforschung. Thesen zur Definition, Vermittlung, Inhalten und Funktionen von historischen Mythen und Kulte*, „Mythos“ 2 (2006), pp. 30–45; Bibliography: H. Hein (with K. Ludwig): *Texte zu politischen Mythen in Europa. Eine Bibliographie zur historisch-politischen Mythosforschung 1994–2004*, „Mythos“ 2 (2006), pp. 227–230.

⁶ H. Hein, *Der Piłsudski-Kult und seine politische Bedeutung für den polnischen Staat 1926–1939*, Marburg 2002; H. Hein, *Freiheitsheld und Symbolfigur: Der Piłsudski-Kult als Mittel nationaler Identitäts- und Bewusstseinsbildung*, „Zeitenblicke“ 3, 1(2004), <http://zeitenblicke.historicum.net/2004/01/hein/index.html> (1.10.2006).

⁷ E.g. H. Hein-Kircher, *Antemurale christianitatis. Grenzsituation als Selbstverständnis*, in: *Grenzen. Gesellschaftliche Konstitutionen und Transfigurationen*, ed. by Hans Hecker, Essen 2006, pp. 129–148.

disposals, patterns of thinking (Denkmuster) and ways of feeling, from which the partially unconscious collective ideas of a society derive”⁸.

Human (and by this: social) thinking and perception are „constructed”, i.e. selective and „imprinted”, because each human (and social) experience is determined by experiences before, by socialisation etc. That means each personal experience is socially influenced and vice versa that experiences of a group are influenced by its members.⁹ Shortly: The detection of reality, i.e. the interpretation of „reality”, is socially constructed.

Personal identity bases on active psychical synthesising and integrating performances, through which this person tries to ensure continuity and coherence of his/her life-experiences. In contrast, „collective identity” is an image, a metaphor. According to Jan Assmann, collective identity is an imaginary magnitude, a social construction, but it belongs also to reality. „Collective” or „we”-identity is understood as the image, which a group builds up of itself and with which its members identify themselves. Therefore, collective identity always bases on the individual consciousness of social belonging, so that this term describes the idea of a person of its own similarity or equality with regard to the other members of its group.

One of the most important parts of personal and collective identity is historical memory resp. consciousness. Historical consciousness describes the relations to the past from a selectively interpreted point of view, because each form of remembrance doesn’t retrieve definitely saved information, but bases on a reconstructive action influenced by actual premises.¹⁰ Historical consciousness doesn’t reflect the „pure” facts, but it shows how a person which is a member of a particular society, and its society, interpret historical facts after their needs and values. Historical consciousness focuses on that what is said to be im-

⁸ A. Simonis, *Mentalität*, in: *Metzler Lexikon Literatur- und Kulturtheorie. Ansätze — Personen — Grundbegriffe*, ed. by A. Nünning, Stuttgart/Weimar 2001, pp. 422–423.

⁹ M. Berek, *Selbstverständliche Mythen — Das Problem, von wahren oder falschen Erinnerungen zu sprechen*, „Politische Psychologie” (in preparation).

¹⁰ M. Berek, p. 2.

portant for the community, for example a founding act of a state, a won or lost war. It does not contain only one event, but more occurrences whose interpretation is built up to an hierarchical relationship. Both, historical consciousnesses and collective identity are negotiated within the group. They are therefore discursive formations, which one can appeal to and/or influence. That means, that culture of remembrance (*Erinnerungskultur*) is always politics of remembrance.

2. Political myths

These discursive formations are particularly built up by political myths. „Myth“ as an analytical category can be seen as a sense-giving narration, which explains unknown or hardly explicable events or facts by things easily understood. Therefore a myth is a cognitive frame of reference, because mythical thinking bases on an aprioristic premise. By this, religious and political myths are similar and differ in regard to the claims and range. A religious myth has transcendent aims, while a political myth should give a society its present orientations.¹¹

Political myths are narrations dealing with political and social events or personalities within a society, but they explain present times by recourse to the past and give them a special connotation. These are „mythically read“¹² — the events or actions are interpreted in a selective and stereotypical way. Therefore a particular event is given a special significance — some facts are overestimated, while others are neglected. This particular event is thus glorified. The political myth implies thus an „exhibition of achievements“, a „show of an excellent performance“ of the society as well as the repertory of myths in a society which can be seen as a „gallery of heroic actions“ or as a „gallery of heroes“. It is a master narrative of a *communio*.

Therefore one can define a political myth as „an ideologically marked narrative which purports to give a true account of a set of past, present,

¹¹ Y. Bizeul, *Theorien der politischen Mythen*, in: *Politische Mythen und Rituale in Deutschland, Frankreich und Polen*, Berlin 2000, p. 17 and Y. Bizeul: *Politische Mythen*, in: *Politische Mythen im 19. und 20. Jh. In Mittel- und Osteuropa*, ed. by H. Hein-Kircher, H.H. Hahn, Marburg 2006, pp. 3–16.

¹² J. Pouillon, *Die mythische Funktion*, in: *Mythos ohne Illusion*, ed. by Claude Lévi-Strauss u.a., Frankfurt a.M. 1984, pp. 68–83, speaks of a „mythical version of reality“ (p. 69).

or predicted political events and which is accepted as valid in its essentials by a social group.”¹³ In other words: „It is a story about occurrences of the past which give these occurrences a special meaning for the present and thus increase the importance of the ruling people.”¹⁴ A political myth is therefore a product of certain political ideas. It is historical and changeable¹⁵ through its semantic structure, from which are derived different kinds of interpretations, in which a political myth functions.¹⁶

This is of importance especially regarding different contexts and conditions of a certain society, in which it often changes its function. By idealising historical events and/or personalities, a political myth is based on an „invented” collective memory. The repertoire of myths within a society is therefore the memory of this society, because it only deals with that which is of importance for the society. Thus they are special forms of *lieux de mémoire*¹⁷. It is build up by emotionally rousing narratives or images, which should confess to and which represent the basic values, ideas and ideals of the society.

3. Contents of political myths

If we compare the content of political myths, it is easy to find parallels or similarities in motives and narration. Mythical narrations follow certain patterns, whose specific content is dependent on the historical, societal, political and cultural context.

It must be added that a repertoire of myths within a society consists of a lot of political myths which could also be composed of „small myths” (mythemes). Myths of a society could be narrated alone, but they could also complete and enforce themselves. The whole repertoire exists

¹³ C. Flood, *Political Myth. A theoretical Introduction*, New York/London 1996, p. 44.

¹⁴ A. Dörner, *Politischer Mythos und symbolische Politik. Sinnstiftung durch symbolische Formen am Beispiel des Hermannmythos*, Opladen 1995, p. 23.

¹⁵ H. Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos*, Frankfurt a.M. 1996.

¹⁶ F. Becker, *Begriff und Bedeutung des politischen Mythos*, in: *Was heißt Kulturgeschichte des Politischen?*, ed. by B. Stollberg-Rilinger, Berlin 2005, pp. 129–148. As to modern theories of political myths see e.g. the anthology: *Texte zur modernen Mythen Theorie*, ed. by W. Barner, Stuttgart 2003.

¹⁷To the sites of memory: P. Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire*, 7 vols., Paris 1984–1992.

mostly virulently and can be activated when it is necessary for a society. Often, these myths form a „mosaic“, by which it is possible to find different nuances of interpretations and certain functions are stressed. Mostly, political myths function complementarily; one myth replenishes the other.

Here I must anticipate that myths have as the primary function to give orientation and to explain what the members of a society are, from where this society comes and so on. Thus a political myth refers to political acts, events, institutions or to the order of the society. That is why you can describe the contents of political myths according to their subjects: there are myth of events, space, time, and last but not least of personalities.

A myth of personality deals with heroes and leading persons, with collective heroes as the fallen soldiers for the country and also with legendary, imagined persons like „Marianne“ in France. The most important form is the myth of living or dead personalities, which personalises history because the worshipped person is meant to „make history“. Therefore the personality myth focuses only on this person, the hero: no other (competing) person has the chance to be seen as him. By this, it creates a historical (mostly fictitious) continuity and tradition, by which the past and present are idealised and the historical development is sharpened to the worshipped „hero“, which developed — after the myth — the society further in the sense of the ruling elites. The idealised persons are mostly interpreted as state-founders or political leaders, they are worshipped as leaders, teachers or father of the society — they are becoming the ideal of the society or state. Collectives of persons are mostly seen when they are helped by a „sacrifice“ or martyrdom to go further on to ideological goals. In this sense, you can see a myth of institution as a myth of a collective, like the myth of the „party“ such as the NSDAP or the Communist Party in the Soviet Union, which personalises the institution.

Generally, each event or act can be mythically interpreted. But in particular battles or revolutions as events are subjects of myths, because they are an „exhibition of an exceptional society's achievements“. These events are seen as historical ruptures or climaxes, with a martial and/or heroic character. Mostly, they are connected with hero-myths.

Myths of space describe and define territories, which are of importance for the society. You can find them where own territory must be defined or where it is claimed, must be justified or defended. The own territory is sanctified by them, and the myths of space help to imagine it.¹⁸ They deal therefore with disputed regions or frontiers and help to define the territory of a *communio*, i.e. as a rule a state. Another but less important content is time. Time-myths deal with a „golden age” — this epoch is interpreted as constitutive for society and as an especially important, intensive and ex post as an ideal development in the sense of the „show of achievements”.

Under another perspective you can differentiate the myths by the „story”:

Nearly all myths are founding-myths, myths of origin; they are so to say, the basic story of a myth. They explain the creation and development of the society which uses them. They deal with the origin of a society, epoch or territory. There are myths of glory on the one hand, on the other myths of sacrifice, of certification¹⁹ and of loss, too. But they all have in common, they explain what is of importance for society, because they all describe an especially interpreted or overestimated historical performance. In particular in small nations you can find myths of sacrifice: but this sacrifice has to be seen in the way, that the sacrifice helps to defend or save not only its own *communio*.

In another perspective, you can analyse the message of political myths. They stage a great success, but can also stage a catharsis or

¹⁸ In analogy to Hobsbawm „invention of territory”: P. Haslinger/K. Holz, *Selbstbild und Territorium. Dimensionen von Identität und Alterität*, in: *Regionale und nationale Identitäten. Wechselwirkungen und Spannungsfelder im Zeitalter moderner Staatlichkeit*, ed. by P. Haslinger, K. Holz, Würzburg 2000, pp. 15–40; H. Hein, *Region jako punkt wyjścia do badań nad kwestiami narodowymi. Znaczenie mitów, symboli i kultów*, in: *Góry Śląsk wyobrażony: wokół mitów, symboli i bohaterów dyskursów narodowych/Imaginiertes Oberschlesien: Mythen, Symbole und Helden in den nationalen Diskursen*, ed. by B. Linek, J. Haubold-Stolle, Opole, Marburg 2005, pp. 36–51.

¹⁹ D. Langewiesche, *Krieg im Mythenarsenal europäischer Nationen und der USA. Überlegungen zur Wirkungsmacht politischer Mythen*, in: *Der Krieg in den Gründungsmythen europäischer Nationen und der USA*, ed. by N. Buschmann, D. Langewiesche, Frankfurt a.M. 2003, pp. 13–22.

a martyrdom of a society. Negative events are valued positively because these events enforce society. This perspective shows as well as the others that political myths are a „master narration” of a society: a myth deals with heroic interpreted events or persons. This includes, that a myth can only be „successful” when it deals with the own past and that thy myth is anchored in the collective memory. It is thus important that the specific „ingredients” of a myth are known by the people — without this knowledge a myth couldn’t be received. The „functional memory” (Funktionsgedächtnis²⁰), which is responsible for (selective) perceptions and remembrance, must be constantly renewed by different media and forms of communication.

4. Forms of communication: political rituals — political symbols — political cults

As instruments to mobilise the masses²¹, it is necessary that the media of communication are in the hand of the „inventors”, carriers and supporters of the myth. Only then can it be communicated and can it be granted that the „message” with its intended political aims is communicated. The political rulers are therefore the main carriers of it „from above”. This shows that myths are an object of politics, that their power of definition and of interpretation is used to foreground their kind of explaining history while others are neglected.

The mythical narration must be communicated, but in a „discrete”, subtle way. The audience should not be aware of being told a „story” or a „myth”, but the „truth”. Therefore the forms of communication can also be seen as forms of expression. Different forms of arts (literature, theatre, fine arts) can be used as well as history (historiography) and schoolbooks to transport the mythical narration. Moreover, one must appeal to the emotions of the „audience” by the myth, because it is also important that the myth is „lived”, emotionally experienced, by which the audience is more often impressed than by the story itself.

²⁰ A. Assmann, *Funktionsgedächtnis und Speichergedächtnis — zwei Modi der Erinnerung*, in: *Generation und Gedächtnis. Erinnerungen und kollektive Identitäten*, ed. by K. Platt, M. Dabag, Opladen 1995, pp. 169–185.

²¹ G.L. Mosse, *The Nationalisation of the Masses. Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich*, Ithaca–London 1996.

Political myths are communicated through narration, visualisation and ritualisation, which guarantee the communicative practice. Commonly various media spread the narration, because it must reach all groups of society. Without the knowledge about the mythical narration, without its anchoring within society, the myth couldn't be understood. Typical media are: historiography, popular-scientific books like biographies, schoolbooks, as well as other print media, film, theatre, music, which tell the story. These media adapt the myth for their „audience“: for example a historical book or journal for children adapts the story in a different way than a book for adults.

Political symbols a visualisation of a myth

The visualisation of a myth is not only reached by the fine arts, but in particular by political symbols which represent the dominating topics of the cultural remembrance. They paraphrase the myth in a non-verbal way and can be seen as „building-bricks of the myth“,²² as they address people's emotional level of comprehension. Flags and hymns are „classical“, political symbols, but also slogans such as „Unity of the working class“, names of towns as Stalingrad, Karl-Marx-Stadt or Washington and also historical dates and events as „3rd May“, (in Poland) or „14th July“ (in France). Symbol carriers such as currency and stamps, street names, the naming of institutions etc. are of importance for the mythical narration. They form a kind of „poly-system“,²³ i.e. a canon of symbols in society, which plays a definite part in the ideological system. All political symbols are instruments of propaganda in all political ideologies and regimes, as they have an effect on the broad public and because they make the prevailing ideology an inherent part of public life.

Monuments and memorials as special forms of political symbols can be experienced visually and which play an important role as centres of remembrance. A monument dignifies the persons, deeds and events connected to the past. It „describes“ the mythical narration and its legacy is revived through celebrations in front of the memorial. It visualises the myth by offering a compressed, symbolic abstraction of interpretations

²² F.W. Doucet, *Im Banne des Mythos*, Gütersloh 1982, p. 94.

²³ M. Azaryahu, *Vom Wilhelmplatz zum Thälmannplatz. Politische Symbole im öffentlichen Leben der DDR*, Gerlingen 1991, p. 43.

in the sense of the myth. Through its message a monument reveals the historical self-conception of society. A monument is therefore a symbol constituting an „imagined community“, a society. It conveys „made-up“, „invented“, traditions and immanent principles of organisation, moreover it reflects the intention of its creators through its semantic and formal design and it demonstrates their political predominance and their ambition to be the power defining politics.²⁴

Political rituals as a nonverbal glossing over of a myth

The myth is however glossed over by political rituals, i.e. political celebrations²⁵ like anniversaries of historical events, deaths or birthdays of important persons, or exceptional rituals like funerals. They replenish a myth as symbolic action in a non-verbal form and „paraphrase“,²⁶ it in an action, which can be „understood as a story at the same time, which explains the rite“,²⁷ as rituals depict a factual connection in a very concentrated and interpreting, non-verbal way. Political rituals have to be experienced in an emotional way because their task is to integrate the participants into the *communio*²⁸.

The public thus has to be integrated by the participation of schools, the military, business enterprises and social associations, since mass character is an important feature of political celebrations. They have to

²⁴ C. Tacke, *Denkmal im sozialen Raum. Nationale Symbole in Deutschland und Frankreich im 19. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen 1995; Hein, *Der Piłsudski-Kult*, pp. 178–180.

²⁵ H. Hein, *Rola kultu Piłsudskiego w kształtowaniu świadomości narodowej w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej na przykładzie uroczystości pogrzebowych oraz obchodów kolejnych rocznic śmierci*, in: *Naród, Kultura, Tożsamość. Między koniecznością a wyborem*, ed. by W. Burszta, K. Jaskułowski, Warszawa 2005, pp. 315–332.

²⁶ H. Blumenberg, *Wirklichkeitsbegriff und Wirkungspotential des Mythos*, in: *Terror und Spiel. Probleme der Mythenrezeption*, ed. by M. Fuhrmann, München 1971, p. 35.

²⁷ S. Behrenbeck, *Der Kult um die toten Helden. Nationalsozialistische Mythen, Riten und Symbole*, Vierow 1996.

²⁸ See K. Weis, *Ritual*, in: *Grundbegriffe der Soziologie*, ed. by Bernhard Schäfers, Opladen 1998, pp. 286–290; K.H. Schreiner, *Tote — Helden — Ahnen. Die rituelle Konstruktion der Nation*, „Historische Anthropologie“ 9 (2009), pp. 54–77; Hein, *Piłsudski-Kult*, pp. 214–266.

be planned very precisely, because they are special moments in the live of the public. In order to have a long-lasting effect, the celebrations are accompanied by recordings on film, articles in newspapers and commemorative publications or similar publications²⁹. The following can be observed as characteristics: a great public interest with a high demand for mobilisation, a prayer or motto accompanying the celebration, a speech stating the objectives of the celebration, parades or processions respectively, music and singing, guaranteeing a standardised course of events. This event takes place mostly all over the country. In this way a repetition of rites and traditions is established. Therefore political celebrations as mass meetings obtain a characteristic form of mobilisation, i.e. a declaration of belief in the group, nation and/or state. Loyalties are revealed by participation, consensus is founded on a long-termed basis and ritually acclaimed; at the same time the dignitaries and organisers can communicate their long-term goals and their policy towards the population, which helps the leaders to demonstrate their claim to leadership. The speeches and other comments are to convey a positive outlook on the future and a collective consciousness regarding the social affiliation of the participants. Therefore they serve as a form of self-assurance and self-identification. If one understands a political celebration, which is also a ritual, as a non-verbal paraphrase of a myth in a symbolic action, a celebration can be considered as „a place of charismatic correlation„³⁰.

²⁹ D. Düding, *Einleitung. Politische Öffentlichkeit, politisches Fest, politische Kultur*, in: *Öffentliche Festkultur. Politische Feste in Deutschland von der Aufklärung bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. by D. Düding, Hamburg 1998, pp. 10–24, here 15.

³⁰ W. Freitag, *Der Führermythos im Fest. Festfeuerwerk, NS-Liturgie, Disconsens und „100%-KdF-Stimmung„*, in: *Das Dritte Reich im Fest. Führermythos, Feierlaune und Verweigerung in Westfalen 1933–1945*, ed. by W. Freitag, Bielefeld 1997, pp. 11–78, here 6.

*Political cults as social praxis of a myth*³¹

„Political cult” stands for a politically motivated, secular but strongly ritualised worship of personalities, not so much for the worship of events, institutions or objects, whereas the precise form of conveyance and expression phenomenologically matches religious cults. That is why personality cults are based on an uncritical overestimation regarding the achievements and the role of a personality in history, creating an image of the person as the only influential power during his rule.

A political cult can thus be seen as a practical dimension of a myth, which has been transformed into an extensive communicative and social practice,³² in particular because a cult is necessarily institutionalised. Therefore it is a typical instrument for mobilisation of the masses. And vice versa: the myth is the „basis in regard to the content” of a cult, because it interprets the achievements of the cult-object in a very selective and one-sided way.

The specific effectiveness of a political cult satisfies the emotional and social wants of the society, as well as giving that society a form of orientation and identity using a pseudo-religious vocabulary. Nevertheless it cannot automatically be seen as a substitute for religion, as religion can still play an important role in spite of complex processes of secularisation.³³

A political cult comprises myths, rituals and symbols, which — acting in combination — are elementary components of political cults, both in regard to content and function. They are both forms of expression and of conveyance at the same time. The degree of their distinction does not solely depend on that of the cult, but they depend on each other,

³¹ H. Hein: *Historische Kultforschung*, in: *Digitales Handbuch zur Geschichte und Kultur Russlands und Osteuropas. Themen und Methoden*, www.vifaost.de/geschichte/handbuch (1.10.2006).

³² See H. Hein, *Historische Mythosforschung als Beitrag zur Erforschung von Identitäten und Ideologien*, in *Methoden der Osteuropäischen Geschichte. Ein Handbuch*, www.vifaost.de/geschichte/handbuch (1.10.2006); K. Meyer, *Mythos und Monument. Die Sprache der Denkmäler im Gründungsmythos des italienischen Nationalstaates 1870–1915*, Köln, 2004, pp. 18–25.

³³ B. Ennker, *Die Anfänge des Leninkultes in der Sowjetunion*, Köln et al. 1997, p. 17.

too: they build a net-work or a system or interwoven structure of elements of interpretation which makes up the cult itself.

In all political cults the worshipped character appears as a charismatic person. If the person is still living, their governmental power belongs, according to Max Weber³⁴, to the three ideal types of legitimate rule. The characterisation of a cult from the 1920s is still symptomatic: „It depends on how much attention the public spends on the person, the public is not led *by* the Great Man but *towards* him!“³⁵ That is why the image of the leader has to be defined very precisely as one needs this kind of image. This can only happen by creating and propagating a certain image of the charismatic person, a myth of the worshipped person.

It is of importance that this instrument does not only occur once, but that it returns on a regular basis and takes influence on the population: Political cults are designed to get the population in the right mood and to conditionise them on the ideals conveyed by the cult, i.e. by the mythical narration which is the basis of the cult. Political cults can thus only develop their specific effectiveness if myths, ritual and symbols act in combination and if they are repeated and institutionalised.

If worship is to be accepted by society, the precondition is that the question of power is clarified, i.e. the promoters and supporters of the cult have the adequate means of power to establish the cult in the society. In order to be wholly accepted the personality cult has to be totally embedded in the tradition of the nation and its society. Therefore a political cult always follows an „invented political myth“,³⁶ which orientates itself towards the social group for which it is invented.³⁷ Political cults therefore can be seen as a culture of interpretation, as an instrument to interpret and to communicate conditions of society.

³⁴ M. Weber, *Die drei reinen Typen der legitimen Herrschaft*, in: M. Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, Tübingen 1988, pp. 475–488, see also T. Biernat, *Legitymizacja władzy politycznej. Elementy teorii*, Toruń 1999.

³⁵ T. Geiger, *Führer und Genie*, „Kölner Vierteljahreshefte für Soziologie“ 6 (1926/27), p. 244.

³⁶ B. Ennker, *Anfänge*, p. 8.

³⁷ M. Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundriß der verstehenden Soziologie*, Tübingen 1980, p. 1.

5. *Functions of political myth*

Foreword: Human predispositions regarding emotions and identity don't differ, which means that all people are in principle susceptible to political myths. Thus the basic functions of political myths are the same, but they are in different contexts differently strong and effective, while the specific content depends on the historical and political context of a society. As a result, each society has a repertoire of myths building a mosaic, which replenish themselves and rebuild one another.

They are as master narrations of a certain society foremost generators of sense for it, because they accentuate excellent, heroic performances and neglect wrong developments.³⁸ Therefore political myths are very necessary elements of identity of a social group and thus political myths are very common. There are political myths in each social group, in nations as well as e.g. in regional societies and „socialistically“ organised societies. They have impact on our historical consciousness and therefore on collective and by this on personal identity, because they help us to imagine a common past. It leads to the conclusion that they are the crystallisation point of historical consciousness and identity.

The main and most powerful function of a myth for a modern society, which often lacks possibilities of orientation and interpretation in a secular world, is to compensate the costs of rationalisation by creating myths. As it deals with climaxes and ruptures of the *communio*, it accounts for its origins and developments and has thus a sense-giving function by interpreting history. Last but not least, it has great impact on historical consciousness, too, because the myth gives history, i.e. historical events or persons, sense and explains the origins of society. It gives orientation, as it disentangles complex events and makes them easier to understand. It has thus a social-political function.

Secondly, it amalgamates the members of a society to one *communio*, because not only by the mythical story, but also by the emotions aroused through the communication of the myth — through symbols, rituals and cults. The mythical narration therefore has influence on val-

³⁸ See H. Hein-Kircher, *Überlegungen*, S. 420–423; G. Schöpf, *The Functions of Myth and a Taxonomy of Myths*, in: *Myth and Nationhood*, ed. by G. Hosking/G. Schöpf, London 1997, pp. 19–35.

ues, world-views and behaviours in favour of the *communio*. The myth and its forms of communication show who belongs to the group, because it demands loyalty and excludes these people who couldn't follow the mythical message. Political myths are thus an important form of self-description of the society and of disassociation towards the people being outside of the group. The myth has a great impact on collective (and through this on personal) identity, but on feelings of „alterity“ (distinguishing from another society), too — therefore the myth must reach everybody within that society.

Thirdly: As political myths form the people into historically effective units, another task is to legitimise the political system and its ideas. Myths and their non-verbal paraphrasing through rituals and symbols, which are the social practice of myths, can therefore be found as instruments of propaganda in all political ideologies and regimes, because they have an effect on the broad public and because they make the prevailing ideology an inherent part of public life. Taking part in a ritual is a kind of acclamation and from the point of view of the ruling elites a kind of plebiscite.

Therefore myths and their forms of communication are key elements of political culture, as they make sure that communication and attachment work in complex social structures such as in modern societies.³⁹ Thus it is a central issue for communication with the masses and for „mobilising“ them in favour of the ruling elites. These integrative, identity-building and legitimising functions show that political myth are particularly of great importance for a group, if it searches for self-awareness and self-identification. On the whole, these basic functions have great impact on collective identity, values and mentality of a society.

6. Conclusion: Mentality and political myths as a topic of research

These theoretical reflections on political myths show that political myths can be found in every society. They are more or less virulent, but they can be activated in times of crisis, of lacking identity or legitimization. Be-

³⁹ K. Mayer, *Mythos und Monument. Die Sprache der Denkmäler im Gründungsmythos des italienischen Nationalstaats 1870–1915*, Köln 2004, pp. 18, 25.

cause they can be activated, they exist in the collective memory, in the historical consciousness of a society and form its mentality. Thus, analysing mentalities of nations, regional societies or other social groups like the „socialist society“, it is important to deal with political myths.

Within the analysis of how political myths have an impact on society, the question of if/how they are received is the methodologically most difficult question, because there aren't any methodological instruments. The only way to see is if you could find them in the collective and cultural memory of a society. If myths are consistent and exist for a long period, it is a hint that this interpretation of history is still functioning. Therefore it is important to analyse the history of their use. If it is found very often over a long period of time, if it is adapted to new realities to be understood by its contemporaries, then it is an indication. Another possibility is, if you can find counter narratives.

The basic task of historical research on myth is to describe the myths not only by re-narrating them, but to analyse the history and reason of their development and their specific forms and functions. It is important to analyse the „inventors“ and promoters of myths and their aims, too, because doing this, you can find the specific intentions of a political myth.

As political myths are master narrations of a society and help to invent traditions and historical continuities, historical research on them contribute to study historical consciousness and collective and cultural identities of national or other imagined social groups. By this, historical research on myths contributes to research on nationalism, regionalism etc as well as to the understanding of authoritarian and totalitarian systems, where the system of political myths in perfected. Its tasks and achievements are not only to find out which role political myths play in the formation of mass societies, how they influence ideologies and political culture, but also how they work within a society, how they are imposed, enforced and consolidated, and by this, how they influence mentalities.

Wpływ mitu politycznego na świadomość historyczną i tożsamość jako czynniki kształtujące mentalność

By odpowiedzieć na zasadnicze pytanie badawcze o wpływ mitów politycznych na mentalność społeczną, autorka w pierwszej kolejności wyjaśnia pojęcie mentalności oraz pamięci w kontekście kategorii świadomości historycznej. Następnie definiuje czym jest mit polityczny, przedstawia drogi jego upowszechniania oraz funkcje, jakie może on pełnić w społeczeństwie. Refleksja na temat mitu politycznego powstała w głównej mierze w oparciu o teoretyczne rozważania Benedykta Andersona na temat „wspólnot wyobrażonych”, studia Aleidy Assmann o pamięci kulturowej, koncepcję „tradycji wyobrażonej” Eryka Hobsbawma i Terence’a Rangera oraz studia na temat funkcjonowania rytuału i kultu politycznego. Jako przykłady fenomenu mitu politycznego posłużyły autorce: kult Józefa Piłsudskiego oraz mit Polski jako przedmurza chrześcijaństwa.

Der Einfluss des politischen Mythos auf das historische Bewusstsein und Identität als mentalitätsbildende Faktoren

Um die Forschungsfrage nach dem Einfluss der politischen Mythen auf die gesellschaftliche Mentalität zu beantworten, erklärt die Autorin zuerst die Begriffe der Mentalität und des Gedächtnisses im Zusammenhang mit der Kategorie des historischen Bewusstseins. Anschließend definiert sie den politischen Mythos, stellt seine Verbreitungswege und Funktionen dar, die er in einer Gesellschaft erfüllen kann. Die Reflexion über den politischen Mythos entstand aufgrund der theoretischen Überlegungen von Benedict Anderson zum Thema der „vorgestellten Gemeinschaft”, der Studien von Aleida Assmann über das kulturelle Gedächtnis, des Konzeptes „der erfundenen Tradition” von Eric Hobsbawm und Terence Ranger sowie der Studien zum Thema der Funktion des Rituals und des politischen Kults. Als Beispiele dienen der Autorin der Kult von Józef Piłsudski und der Mythos Polens als ein Bollwerk des Christentums.

Marcin Radwan

Film as a historical narrative

This article is devoted to the concepts of visual history promoted by Natalie Zemon Davis. Her work focuses on researching the early modern history of France and the Mediterranean countries. Davis is a retired professor at Princeton and Toronto Universities. Her interests comprise social and cultural history. After a thorough archival research in 1982 she became a consultant for the filming of *Le retour de Martin Guerre*, becoming at the same time, the first 'historian — filmmaker' who could fully influence the screenplay. Davis is a believer in the co-existence of the historical truth and *fiction rooted in* the movie. Currently, she is studying the history of *gender*, as well as the history of Jews in Suriname. The body of her major works includes: *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: Eight Essays*, *The Return of Martin Guerre*, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in Sixteenth Century France*, *Women of the Margins: Three Seventeenth — Century Lives* and *Remaking Imposters: From Martin Guerre to Sommersby*.¹

The prominent American scholar has for a long time been advocating the creation of a documentary that would evoke 'the image of the past'. From the outset, however, she was confronted with criticism of conservative historians reluctant to the new approaches in historiography. The history, according to Davis, should focus on ordinary people

¹ *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: Eight Essays*, Stanford University Press 1975; *The Return of Martin Guerre*, Harvard University Press 1983; *Fiction in the Archives: Par don Tales and their Tellers in Sixteenth Century France*, Stanford University Press 1987; *Women of the Margins: Three Seventeenth — century Lives*, Harvard University Press 1995; *Remaking Imposters: From Martin Guerre to Sommersby*, Royal Holloway Publications Unit 1997.

and their everyday life. At the same time, she emphasizes the need to 'visualize' the realm of past communities' conflicts. At this point, the question arises whether one is able to 'see history'?

The starting point for the discussion should be the famous Davis' statement that „historical films should let the past be past.”² If so, should the movie be breaking one of the historian work dogma stating that it recalls and interprets the past for the present?

The history, following Zemon Davis, should depart from „telling history in prose” as „with patience, imagination, and experimentation historical narration through film could both become more dramatic and more faithful to the sources from the past”.³ Historian — director who attempts to visualize the history should be based on sources, but also possess the knowledge of the likely sensitivity of the people of the past. The attempt to visualize the past should, therefore, focus not on the surface, or putting on the historical costume, but on the contemplation of the interior of the past people.

The historical film or the visualization of the past, contrary to historiography, focuses only on universal truths. The turning of reality into fiction in feature films, free from adhering strictly to the source base, „can make cogent observation, can make it historical events, relations and processes”⁴, „reveal social structures and social codes in a given time and place”.⁵ The visualization itself, as Gillio Pontecorvo claims, makes the past come into life not only through the use of historical costumes, but mostly thanks to the creation of the impression of intimacy of everyday life. To obtain the reality effect the feature film should then take the paradocumentary or almost reportage form.

Zemon Davis sees the making of 'visual history' as a "thought experiment", with which one can "try out the past"⁶. The „experiment” defined this way, made by the director with other” movie makers and together with the spectators, is meant to pose the question to the past what turn would it would it take.

² N. Zemon Davis, *Slaves on Screen. Film and Historical Vision*, Harvard University Press 2000, p. 136.

³ Ibidem, p.xi.

⁴ Ibidem, p. 5.

⁵ Ibidem, p. 6.

⁶ Ibidem.

The audiovisual explosion comes with the danger of yielding to the temptation of novel reality registration techniques. Historians, contrary to regular recipients of the world presented in the movie, are aware of constructivist practices. Nevertheless, they should allow the film maker to subjectively create the vision of the world. This leads to the assumption on the need of drawing conclusions without proposing fixed opinions of the past. The imagination and speculation become the new quality, as they are not falsifying the truth but only present one of the possible tales of the past. The film depicts reality through „(...) bringing some characters, situations and images closer”⁷, leading up to almost absorbing the viewer in the past, as Zemon Davis claims. The spectators receive the interpretation and not the falsification of the past reality, which from now on will be visualized in their minds, through the motion picture. The process of visualization does not mean the mechanical perception of the film vision, but stirring the discussion around the on-screen characters.

What is the message from the past contained in movies? Natalie Zemon Davis in her book *Slaves on Screen. Film and Historical Vision* of 2000, focused the attempt to answer the question on movies concerning the slave rebellions, as part of a socio-cultural discourse. The film *in statu nascendi* may bring the truth about the past reality closer, through the uniqueness of the creation of the presented world, which is close to authenticity. For Anglo-Saxon theoreticians even a feature film has the same source value, and not only just as a carrier of cultural messages, but, what is more important, as a historical testimony. The movie directors wishing to create a unique vision of the past, create a specific research workshop that allows the past world detail reconstruction. Which is not only the staffage costume of the era, but which also utilizes the base source.

The motion picture can display suggestions about political culture settings of the past realities. Zemon Davis says that “we see or hear these factions in a general way in the film”⁸. The impression of visibility and audibility of the film story allows the viewer to identify with what is

⁷ *Revisioning History. Film and the Construction of New Past*, ed. by Robert A. Rosenstone, Princeton, New Jersey 1995, p. 7.

⁸ N. Zemon Davis, *Slave on Screen. Film...*, p. 28.

on the screen. The movie, next to the true historical figures, recalls the probable attitudes of the people of the past in the everytime present. As the screen past contains everytime a present, however many a time would it be actualized by the spectator. The visualization of the past does not only aim at presenting the public domains of the past world, nor does it focus on the semi-private sphere, instead, it arises the spectator's need to imagine the setting of the people entangled in the heterogenic community context. By the same token, the viewer makes a comparison between the antropocentrically-oriented present with the past, visualized by the director. The motion picture can, therefore, be the suggestion of solutions, the possible people's attitudes in specific social settings.

The visualizations of the past are not free from stating general truths, mostly unrelated to the era in which the movie is set. The process is evoked by the specific need of bringing a prominent individual closer to the ordinary spectator. Next to it, however, there appear „important social processes and critical experiences of the past”.⁹ The movie can then be a substitute of many a historiographical interpretation brought together into one imagined vision. The visibility is rooted in the grasping of social differences via culture coding of navigating the social sphere, such as wearing clothes in a specific color, and finally by the expression rhetoric emphasizing the status of the human identity. The motion picture is therefore, most often, the registry of social sphere aporia that calls upon the spectator to take a stand! The individual film frame can become a representation of the important past events, but also of an everyday life set againts all the intricacies of the social conventions. The movie can reconstruct all, for example all the great battles, by depicting their true essence.

The film story about the past *in crudo* treats the probability law as a starting point. Additionally, it introduces the element of timelessness which has to be congruent with the sensitivity of the viewer who is current with the moment of the movie's creation. The movie, however, is very often interpreted as a symbol which bears a great responsibility of the movie maker for the created social awareness.

⁹ Ibidem, p. 36.

The director — historians always orient their film stories to the historical world, pointing out the complexity of the political setting as well as the didactic layer *spectrum* which deals mostly with the hardships of an individual being limited by the rules of the past reality. The movie becomes the expression means allowing to create the historical awareness, and also bringing in the possible change in the viewer of the piece. The movie maker can then seem as a compassionate observer, telling a story "(...) under the dictatorship of truth", as Gillio Pontecorvo, a prominent promotor of Italian neorealism, states¹⁰. Zemon Davis wishes the director presenting the past, depict the complexity of the historical processes by the same token.

The movie narrative about the past deconstructs life, together with all the procedures that organized the life of past societies. The motion picture can then become a microhistory, the testimony of the past, not focusing solely on revealing the truth. Finally, it brings about diverse interpretations on the typical social attitudes.

On the other side, it bases on stereotypes of possible past people's behaviours. The viewer sees as „individual persons emerge with their own traits”¹¹ that are not seen with such intensity in no other sources of information, even in the written historical works. The movie can well present the transformation of the human thought into the plain free from social assumptions. The fluctuation of the borders of social and political hierarchy can, thanks to filming, grow into the historical symbol, presenting the shift of human expectations¹². The movie may well be a herald of the changes coming in turning moments for the old and the new world, which will then become an element that unifies the society, rejected by the next mental or opinion revolutions. The motion picture brings about the personal empathy for the on-screen heroes.

The transparent subject *quantum* taken up in the historical film history is the issue of trauma and its memory, stemming out of the experience of 20th century. The movies treating this subject shun away from the sentimental staffage, they are not mirroring the real events. Making

¹⁰ See J.J. Michalczyk, *The Italian Political Filmmakers*, Rutherford, New Jersey 1986

¹¹ N. Zemon Davis, *Slave on Screen. Film...*, p. 64

¹² See *The Reversible Word: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society*, ed. B. Babcock, Ithaca 1978

into fiction makes the film narrative deeper. At times, nevertheless, the imagination of the film makers, as Zemon Davis claims, which increase the film tension or the drama, seem to be unnecessary and random. On the other hand, these processes can lead to the creation of a new space, a sort of micro-history of probable parallel world which exists right next to the well documented, reliable source.

The film narrative that utilizes the language of symbols, at many times, simplifies the historical processes, which is caused by the filming time limit. The viewer receives a type of code which then has to be read and interpreted. The movie, nevertheless, through pretending to be the truth which in fact is only a fantasy, revives specific symptoms, typical of the people of the past. The motion picture as a communication system attempts to show a possible anthropocentric convention of the past collectives, together with its customs and mentality. The spectator is presented, by the same token, with an audible and visible speculation on the model historical personality.

Zemon Davis traverses the artifact basis of the film history of the past as a need to invent everyday life which then becomes a type of *possible personality*. Thanks to this, taking up topics that raise the general social discussion, the movie can have a therapeutic function. This, in turn, brings on a responsibility for people's lives, as the depicted problems can concern true feelings causing traumatic experiences. That is exactly why the film maker should pay special attention to the inner state of the on-screen personas. The motion picture becomes very often a vision that is based on the richness of the film language or the cultural play. By the same understanding, the studying of the inner personal experience is reduced to the visualization art.

The strength of the visual history lies in the similarity of the on-screen personas and their interactions to the traces of the past that reside in the minds of the spectators. The appearance of the epic history, which is constantly expanding the movie genre about the past, poses questions to the past realities. The historical movie reaches a catachresis, as it normally refers to the political life, social rebellions, "the interest period of political control, foreign investment, trade and labor"¹³. The motion picture normally tries to capture the moment of the shift, which

¹³ Ibidem, p. 122.

become the background for the fictitious personal stories which do not step into the realm of historical analysis, as Zemon Davis claims. The visualization of the past, if it recalls a real life individual, it swaps the real personality by the imaginary version of it.

The film tries to portray the cultural nuances, creating a psycho-social approach to the past. "Telling the truth" by the motion picture boils down to the very fact of the filming, which allows the spectators to believe in the possible cultural setting. For the movie makers the motivation to create a piece of art using the past comes down to the mere curiosity. The director does not often try to deeply understand the historical processes and turns into the representation. An interesting take on the fact is presented by Meredith Maran and Anne McGrath which say that the events in the visualized past have taken place, but we are not sure if that is exactly how it happened. The movie only speculates, and it does that in a manner that is distant in timeliness of the story, and the feelings of the people of the present and distinct from the heroes of the past. That is why the visualization serves the purpose not of the knowledge but of the visibility. One should see, not know, the little fragments, which in the end still change the truth, says Davis.

By the same token, the best definition of the film historical tale is the assumption that blends the real events with fiction. The movie can try to fill out the gaps in history. This is something the historiography does not allow. The motion picture can bring the truth closer through the thought experiment, according to Zemon Davis. Nevertheless, if the directors fracture the source base "they risk [then — M.R.] leading to wrong conclusions"¹⁴. The meaning of the historical outlook still lies with the viewers, as it is them who decide to attribute the paradigm to the screen truth. Filling out the gaps transfers the sensitivity to the past in the present, and sometimes also into the future. The movie gets at the same time the excuse for simplifying the stories which are not prone to misunderstanding due to high complexity, as in the case of historiography.

The movie has to respect the historical sources even if that means that the dramatization of the story has to be dropped. The testimony, the proof of the past can become a matrix from which comes the im-

¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 127.

pression of the past times. Additionally, the historical film does not have to be ludic to code the spectator with an easy cultural game, the knowledge of the past does not have to be processed. It is enough to apply an appropriate parallel between the present and the past.

Zemon Davis postulates that visualization should be accompanied by equivalents that would explain the choices for a particular past fragments, conditioned by the sources by the directors. The professional historians have to be safeguarding the truthfulness of the source visualization. The history, however, "is not a locked for new discoveries"¹⁵, that is why at one point it will open to fictional film stories. There can not be a situation in which "history will be given an open form"¹⁶, and it will not provide answers as to the causes of individual processes. The historical movie has to pose questions to the audience about "the evolution of the history and historical knowledge"¹⁷. The film as a cultural game can well sneak in the new social model which popularizes the critical historical thinking, and, sometimes, it can even pose judgments of general nature. The rule of not transforming the past in the films becomes fully valid. The past does not have to be made more attractive for the audience. It is enough to add a human universal element for the visualization of the past to make the audience more sensitive to the world.

Transferring history through the film

The subject of the historical movie evolves around the concept of representation and historicity. In this sense, one has to ask a question about the repetition of the historical models which are used in the motion pictures. These issues are raised by an American scholar Ann E. Kaplan, the professor of contemporary English film studies at the State University of New York, where she is also the head of Institute of Humanities. Her works include: *Rocking Around the Clock: Music, Television, Post Modernism and Consumer Culture* of 1987, *Motherhood and Representation: The Mother in Popular Culture and Melodrama* of 1992.

The distinguished researcher of the gender spheres calls the film inspirations a historical formation which is indispensably linked to the

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 133.

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 135.

¹⁷ Ibidem, p. 136.

target audience. She focuses the subject of the history used in the cinema around psychoanalytical projection which, in turn, visualizes the metaphor of social relations for the spectator creating new space for action. For Kaplan, cinema is a domination tool. Through the work of the camera, one creates a distanced outlook upon the world which oftentimes is far from the truth:

*The camera becomes the ethnographic tool through which cultures are 'otherized' and brought to Western populations without their needing to move physically from their cinema.*¹⁸

The psychoanalytical transmission of history is inextricably linked to the visualization, thanks to adaptation, and normalization of the specific cultural play. Many a time, the subject raised by the cinema opens up a new space of occurrences, previously unknown to the wider audience. The motion picture always refers to a hypothetical viewer which possesses specific sensitivity.

*The spectator is encouraged to comply through complex mobilizing of unconscious libidinal desires via the narrative.*¹⁹

One has to emphasize the role of the historical spectator, one contemporary to the moment of film creation. The current viewer fits into the current discourse practice in a different way than the viewer which looks at the movie from a time distance. The concepts based on Michel Foucault's theory proposed in *L'ordre du discours* of 1971, concludes that there is no way to define a unique spectator model which is identical to each time period. That is why Kaplan limits the history-loaded film definition, just like N. Zemon Davis, to the thought experiment which should lead the way for the human mind.

The spectator identification is normally linked to the unconscious description of the social group which updated the historical film, very often at the cost of other viewers representation. As Kaplan claims, the movie can deny the flux of members of certain social group through the multiplication of the well-grounded stereotypes. The cinema should build the consciousness which would unify the human thought, and not become

¹⁸ A.E. Kaplan, *Film and History: Spectatorship, Transference and Race*, in: *History and... Histories within the Human Sciences*, ed. by Ralph Cohen and Michael S. Roth, Virginia 1995, p. 180.

¹⁹ Ibidem, p. 182.

an institution that fixes the authority of a specific human representation. This typical feminological approach shows the conventionality of the screen story which is always supported by a certain goal, brought about by the need of visual expression in historically relevant moment.

The motion picture that uses the past can also be called a "film's framing narrative"²⁰ to which the viewer becomes standardized, and which most often creates a distance to the screen narrative. Very often the viewer, thanks to the psychoanalytical representation, starts to feel empathy for the on-screen anthropocentrically oriented reality. The viewer's imaginations are visualized which tame the unconscious parts of life. The movie, on one side, tames, and on the other intentionally shapes the consciousness of the viewers by normalizing the interpersonal relations. Cultural codes and norms signaling are used for that purpose, which are appropriate for the human collectiveness, which transfers the public debate to the sphere of „individual psychic conflict”²¹.

The movie maker assumes *implicite* that the viewer will sympathize with the screen characters, even though not much is known about them. That is why the viewer can intentionally actualize the film telling the story which so far has been unknown. The discourse practice brings closer the representation whose formation requires visualizing for a wider social group. The movie "raises in the fact, some of the cultural and racial issues that would have interested [the hypothetical viewer — M. R]"²². The spectator encounters the ready-made intertextual historical situations whose elusiveness testifies only about the imagination of the possible historical world. The illusion, thanks to contexts, links the present with the fantasies or the recorded reality. In spite of the fact that the cinema shapes the consciousness and identity, it achieves this by „technological manipulation”²³. On the other hand, though, the history rooted in the film can arouse empathy of the viewers for a specific problem.

The past framed in a screen is by Kaplan called the visibility of history, which leads the viewer to interact in the screen story. The spectator, thanks to the illusion of anthropological similarity, will be able to identify

²⁰ Ibidem, p. 190.

²¹ Ibidem, p. 192.

²² Ibidem, p. 195.

²³ Ibidem, p. 198.

with the simulated cultural reality. The most important process of film history transition is coding, which, with cinema strategies, shapes not only consciousness but also the historical knowledge of human collectiveness.

Movie historical revisions: within the circle of American history and film theory discourse

Robert A. Rosenstone in his preface to *Re-visioning History. Film and Construction of a New Past* of 1995 announces the domination of the visual age. At the same time, he calls upon for the visual carries got the full privilege in creating, and telling the story through “representing, interpreting (...) the traces of the past”²⁴ What he means by that is definitely not the documentaries nor costume films but what is called the new historical movie, which „deals with the relation of the past to the present”²⁵. The movie in the cultural dawn of audiovisual explosion is the best carrier of history as it reaches such a wide range of audience.

In the course of evolution of film theory, the historical movie has been treated as a mirror for socio-political tendencies of a given period. The new historical film is now supposed to help historians immersed in the traditional research methods clarifying the historical processes. The history in the movie is strictly conventionalized, and that is why it is possible to compare between the written and visual history version. The most important is to set out from a question about what codes and strategies are used by the new historical movie to get to the absent past unreachable for the traditional historiography?

Rosenstone introduces the concept of a new historical movie as opposed to the Hollywood productions created at the time of great interest in the past, which was nevertheless only considered quite shallowly. At the time, the costume drama became well defined which treated the past as the staffage for a romantic or adventure tale. In parallel, there became to appear the continental movies, especially common in the totalitarian countries which have much earlier than the academic history brought in the facts of everyday life. Nevertheless, these movies have not been created to raise the historical awareness of the society,

²⁴ *Revisioning History. Film and Construction of a New Past*, ed. by Robert A. Rosenstone, Princeton, New Jersey 1995, p. 3.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

but for the sake of catachresis of the cultural play. The motion picture *expressis verbis* was focusing on transmitting the emotions caused by the social dissonance around the trauma of the past. The picture of the past is then different than the written word conceptualization.

The historical film is a visualization game that is also a fictionalized interpretation. Documentary presents another case which *in statu nascendi* is closer to the fact. These two film genres for the Anglo-Saxon researchers should consist the picture of the past.²⁶ The movie via visualization presents how emotions and feelings influence an individual both in the past, through simulation, and presently. The motion picture becomes a close-up version of the past.

The history cannot shun away from abstraction, neither can film which on top of that requires generalizations, as it is *sui generis* a recording of a specific perception of the history course. The motion picture is, at the same time, a concrete example, which can contest the historical truth or constructively framed historical knowledge. Rosenstone focuses the visual history around the inner life of people entangles in the historical process. The history undergoing the modern Anglo-Saxon criticism is, in this case, a linear, analytical and finally scientific discourse. The new historical movie, contrary to the history, comprises the vision of the past which includes grand events as well as abstract processes. Finally, the visualization of the past is complimented by "the artificiality of the historical categories"²⁷.

An important aspect is the revision of history, which refers to the reinvention of the world understanding which is possible when the ontic status is assigned to the creations of historiography. The film screen in a metaphorical sense becomes „a window through which we observe a world"²⁸ thanks to which the movie makers speak on behalf of the past.

The Anglo-Saxon discussion around the historical film is opened by the Michigan University professor, Geoff Eley. A prominent analyst of German 19th and 20th century history. The author of the following works: *Reshaping the German Right: Radical Nationalism and Politi-*

²⁶ Ibidem, p. 6.

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 10.

²⁸ Ibidem, p. 11.

cal Change after Bismarck. London and New Haven (Yale University Press, 1980), *From Unification to Nazism: Reinterpreting the German Past* (London Routledge, 1986), *A Crooked Line: From Cultural History to the History of Society* (University of Michigan Press, 2005). In his essay *Distant Voices, Still Lives. The Family is a Dangerous Place: Memory, Gender, and the Image of Working Class* of 1995, Eley began a new chapter of hist studies — on *visual history*.

Eley takes an assumption that the movie and photography are the representations of history. The motion picture is rooted on the guarantee of social sense of storytelling on essential issues of human collectiveness, most often of a specific group. The movie is *par excellence* a cultural expression which emphasizes the belonging to a specific social group. The visualizations of the past should then construct anthropologically-oriented statements, which additionally define the national essence and the typicality of the group. The problem arises when the movie can be confronted with the collective memory. In that case, there can be discrepancies on how things are visualized.

The movie as a visualization of the past can have an auxiliary role for the scientific discourse thanks to its base archetypes, similarities in people's characters. This can sometimes be a very partial depiction. Eley stresses the fact that only starting with the New Wave in British movie one can observe the emergence of films which build a parallel between the movie and the ordinary men who is being observed and not created. The social environment is then defined through the language aspects which constitute the discourse of a given collectiveness. The movie makers should, therefore, take to the screens the social problem²⁹ depicted in the moment of historical change.

Eley believes in the possibility of film representation delivered by means of movie conventions, the outlook of the reality with no ontic sense. The old historical cinema was immersed in the costume conventionalization, and only the changes of the movie narrations have, as Isabel Quigly claims, brought about the departure from the fakeness

²⁹ G. Eley, *Distant Voices, Still Lives. The Family is a Dangerous Place: Memory, Gender, and the Image of Working Class*, in: *Re-Visioning History. Film and the Construction...*, p. 19.

and the acceptance of the real experience of a specific social group.³⁰ It should be mentioned that this is an individual experience of a movie maker which fits in well in a questioning cultural approach. Hence, in the film social representation there can be a rejection of a romantic or nostalgic approach to the constructive past changes.

The difficulty lies in the orientation of historical formation, under which *implicite* is the partial opinion of a social group together with its structure and identity. Eric Hobsbawm says that in the observation one should reach the outlook on the home environment, work place, life style, and the past time activities³¹. The movie can well become not only the fantasy on the national norms which shaped the quantum of traits belonging to a specific collective. The motion picture secures, by the same token, the expectation or the social identity. The director, Terence Davies, goes even further and claims that the movie creates a unique mosaic of memory³². The closest to the truth of visualization can be the naturalist formalism of the family life. In this case, it is the smallest social unit that focuses the historical fluctuations. There is nothing more accurate than the household that allows us to observe simulations of the past people.

The movie creator by imagination lets the viewer to consolidate, or to create redefinition of the past abstraction. Here one can get close to Davies statements, or go even further stating that the visualization of the past is the model definition of how memory rooted in the movies should be shaped. *Expressis verbis* the motion picture is reconstruction of the reality³³. More attention is devoted to the artifacts of the micro-history of everyday life than to the observation of the main political stream. For Eley, the movie is a specific recollection that is based oftentimes on the work of academic discourse. It is not a question that is analyzed based on truth but on the memory of the creator, which is a visual and emotional relation from memorizing. The creator via history expresses who we are.

³⁰ See R. Hewison, *In Anger: British Culture in Cold War, 1945–60*, Oxford 1981.

³¹ Cf. E. Hobsbawm, *Workers: Worlds of Labor*, New York 1984.

³² Cf. T. Davies, *A Modest Pageant: Six Screenplays with an Introduction*, London 1992.

³³ G. Eley, *Distant Voices, Still Lives. The Family is a Dangerous...*, p. 28.

The movie can be a sign that indicates a dissonance between the past and present. The semantic sign that corresponds with the popular memory about the past reality can tame it by reminding which becomes a rotating gallery, as expressed by Roger Bromley³⁴. The visualization can then be a stylistic or iconographic code or finally 'cultural mediation'³⁵ with the inner, everyday world. Similarly, for Eley the movie about the past becomes a re-visioning of the historical social contexts.

Another point of view is offered by Michael S. Roth, the humanist professor of the Hartley Burr Alexander institute in Scripps College, and the head of the European Studies in Claremont Graduate School.

For Roth, the movie about the past is a construct that brings about the knowledge about reality. The problem is posed when one should decide whether history is a science or an art? What constitutes the need to recall the past? The starting point is the stale memory models which shape the film. The motion picture should create the viewpoint on the trauma of the past reality though several warnings against the oppressive culture and politics. The movie, in this way, means the remembrance of the past which is carried inside the witnesses of the history. This has nothing to do with the need to create a monument for the times that passed but the warning signs, especially after the 20th century trauma. The motion picture „does not capture the past, but it can provoke u into an awariness of present dangers"³⁶. The film memory becomes a confrontation with the absence of the past reality.

The visualization of the past can become an understanding of the forgotten. That is also why the historical movie does not always have to be a representation. The motion picture contains the traces of the past. Roth does not mean here a simulation of the abstract past reality. The past is always unreachable. The film story builds on the individual and collective memory which allows to face the force of forgetting³⁷. Stephen Heath speaks even about the narratization of the memory in the film through the feeling as though the viewers have remembered

³⁴ Cf. R. Bromley, *Lost Narratives: Popular Fictions, Politics, and Recent History*, London 1988.

³⁵ Ibidem, p. 5.

³⁶ M.S. Roth, *Hiroshima Mon Amour. You must remember this*, in: *Revisioning History. Film and...*, p. 93.

³⁷ Ibidem, p. 98.

the past events themselves, and they were coming back thanks to the illusion of participation³⁸. The movie can finally have a therapeutic role bringing about the vision of the trauma, taming it, and making it, therefore, into a question mark but not necessarily rejecting the memory.

Why should one recall history using the picture? The time always has the upper hand and there is no other way to the past than the written word, but also the motion picture which constitutes the memory of the society, experiencing the imagination of the past reality, makes it visible. For Roth the movie constitutes the narrative memory „which assimilates (...) the past into a form that can be ‘interated’ into the present”³⁹. The constructive approach to the motion picture sets the starting point the transformation of the past to make sure it is being preserved.

Another voice in the debate of historical and film theory is the essay *The Home and the World. The Invention of Modernity in Colonial India* by the anthropology and history professor of Michigan University Nicholas B. Dirks. One of the most prominent work of the analyst of colonial and post-colonial history of India is *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* of 1987. The movie for Dirks is very often an allegory of antinomy, which emphasizes the differences between domination spheres of one social group over the other. The motion picture is best in reflecting the space which defines the people of the past. It is an evident division into the public and private life sphere.

The visualizations of the past depict the transversion between spheres that organize past reality. The most often tamed is regaining freedom by disadvantaged social groups or of genderism in women, a freedom that has so far belonged to the privileged few. The film can then become “intervention for the current debate”⁴⁰ of socio-cultural and political nature through emphasizing unresolved social issues. The motion picture can also take up the discourse against the cultural traditions. It is constantly alive by actualization, differently than the written word. The movie can show also the fluctuation of the history and the possible comparison between different cultures and societies.

³⁸ Cf. S. Heath, *Questions of Cinema*, Bloomington 1981.

³⁹ M.S. Roth, *Hiroshima Mon Amour...*, p. 100.

⁴⁰ N.B. Dirks, *The Home and the World. The Invention of Modernity in Colonial India*, in: *Re-Visioning History. Film and...*, p. 53.

The cinema uses the set of signs thanks to which the difference between the old and the new, the tradition and the modernity is shown. The historical simulations are mostly focused on the inner world of the past people which constitutes the own creative version of the history. Dirks even claims that the modern world can be subject to revision by the sensitivity of the movie makers.

The Oberlin College history professor, Clayton R. Koppes in his essay *Radio Bikini. Making and Unmaking Nuclear Mythology* of 1995 takes on an interesting subject of mythologization by historical movies. The film documents allow us to show the repainting of the official history especially by the politics of a country. The danger that goes together with the motion picture used for the propaganda purposes or the intentions of the authority does not let historians stay impartial. The movie creator taking up discourse with the historical discrepancies can evoke a re-estimation of the biased factual information. By the same token, thanks to the reportage processes and truth seeking, one can discover the falsifications of the history.

Koppes brings the visualization of the past down to the montage movie which should combine the inherent archive material and the current reportage narrative. Thanks to that, a specific piece of history is shown but in different time frame and having different origin. That is why the director demythologizes the past with the picture. The creator discovers 'unnaturality' of the screen reality⁴¹ that is brought about by the film archives pertaining to be the explanatory myth for each specific political decision and not only in the totalitarian countries. The motion picture can also herald civilization contrasts by assigning them a mythical quality. By the same token, the movie maker, on one side, demythologizes in his edit the reality of the movie chronicles, and on the other, tames the myths which arose around unexplained or falsified aspects of the past.

Can there be a picture which seeks new scientific truth or will it always remain a mythologizing work of art? The creator can shape the narrative using the means typical for mythologization, but with time it always aims at the truth. In the montage movie the intertextual signs

⁴¹ C.R. Koppes, *Radio Bikini. Making and Unmaking Nuclear Mythology*, in: *Re-Visioning History. Film and...*, p. 129.

are the power which veils the unnaturality of the movie model. Very often the following pairs are established: consequence with smooth assurances, harmlessness of the authority or of some other power. The film can then serve history against the creators of the visual discourse who use the mass medium of expression to create the official version of the truth.

Daniel Sipe, the history professor of the Moore College of Art and Design in Philadelphia cooperated as a consultant in many prominent documentaries, including *Small Happiness* of 1985. In his essay *From the Pole to the Equator. A Vision of a Wordless Past* of 1995 he elaborates on the concept of western civilization attached to the written word which is fiercely opposed by the motion picture. For the professional historians, only the word paradigm can bring in a useful interpretation of the past. The movie can become a popular means of spreading the history⁴². Sipe believes that it is possible to create a visualization that does not have to be accompanied with words. Only the vision would remain and 'real time'⁴³, which will bring the viewer straight to the screen past. The silent documentaries can present the real time as long as they abandon the standards of movie narratives.

The creation of the experimental documentary is only possible after doing the archiving work for a potential film. One should then dig out all the fragments that have not made it to the final cut, at the same time creating a new quality of a documentary dealing with the past. Once again, the reflection of the creator's consciousness is emphasized, who by leading the silent narration and the selection of the material is still present. The movie maker who „re-directs” has to keep the integrity of the picture, as the montage documentary cannot diverge from the original.

The motion picture with no words causes the viewer to focus on the visuals only. The Anglo-Saxon discourse based on the Freudian theory draws a parallel between the dream and the movie, both of which can influence the human in a similar way. The spectator has to face and alternative history which leads to the critical approach to the movie mate-

⁴² D. Sipe, *From the Pole to the Equator. A Vision of a Wordless Past*, in: *Re-Visioning History. Film and...*, p. 174.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 176.

rial.⁴⁴ The viewer can judge the behavior of the characters but also their way of life. The silent document allows for a personal interpretation, the viewer becomes at the same time „an analytic, an active interrogator rather than a passive spectator“⁴⁵. The camera registers reality and not faking it very often controls but never influences the screen situation as it is idiopathic.

The problem arises when the weight point is shifted to the cultural communication system, as the movie has to build a set of signs. When it would be deprived of the code catalogue, the movie would not be congruent with the cultural games. That is why Sipe hints on the fact that the most important process in the documentary montage is generating a historical proof through the message. The historians do not want to document the historical traits using the film, as the world is dominated by the written word paradigm.

The movie, contrary to a documentary, is based on ludicism. Even if it recalls the past, it does so for a market reason. The feature films can be used to analyze the social mentality which reflects the interest in the specific past or anthropologically oriented problem. This inherentness leads the movie to be deprived of history testimony status. The movie is not a historical source but only a registration of the social consciousness. A slightly different example is presented by the *praxis* of collectiveness, tuned to the audiovisual channel which is characterized by inertia. At the same time, the motion pictures can become a historical testimony. The technological progress can bring about change in the approach to the cinema which similarly to the written word will gain a status of proof. The modern technologies of film making *sub specie semioticae*, which are supposed to make information widely available lead in reality the specific social or political movement to the commercialized promotion actions.

Sipe claims that it is exactly the film that is the best possible medium to register abstract inter-actionism of *oral history*. The movie can grasp “the impact of the interlocutor, the setting of the interview and the dynamics of the interviewer and the interviewee”⁴⁶. The motion pictures

⁴⁴ Cf. C. Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema*, New York 1990.

⁴⁵ D. Sipe, *From the Pole to the Equator. A Vision...*, p. 179.

⁴⁶ Cf. Idem, *The Future of Oral History and Moving Images*, „Oral History Review”, 1991, no. 1–2.

can, by the same token, provide a historical proof, as they register details of the past. That is why the movie can really project reality, letting the man „to control the time and the space”.⁴⁷ The motion picture creates a visual memory which allows for recalling thoughts and emotions. Hayden White suggested in the concept of *historiophoty* that it is possible to create a cinema discourse that would be a historic representation of the human thoughts framed as visual pictures.⁴⁸

The impression of experiencing real time is only a convention, a montage illusion. The time in the film registry is subject to creative manipulation. This assumption becomes the starting point for the essays of Vermont University professor, Denise J. Youngblood. The prominent analyst of the Russian popular and political culture in her work *Repentance. Stalinist Terror and the Realism of Surrealism* of 1995 takes on the subject of the movie substitute of the political power. The movie as a means of shaping the historical knowledge does not have any creative side which creates and interprets the facts. The motion picture should aspire to the status of era representatives, even if it were to employ a surrealist convention. There is nothing more than the veiled “accurateness” of the facts that brings the exact interpretation of the past whose symptoms would not be able to be portrayed directly.

The movie creator building his picture narrative can revive the mentality of the past realities. Even if the historical parallel would not be obvious, it directly affects the social experiencing of the past era.⁴⁹ The film directors very often choose methods created by structuralism as their narration ways. The movie picture of the past can become the registration of the artifacts expressed by the surreal modeling which allows for alleviating the pain of the past. The viewer can with the movie „experience the real sense of relief”⁵⁰, as the trauma of the past be-

⁴⁷ D. Sipe, *From the Pole to the Equator. A Vision...*, p. 184.

⁴⁸ Cf. H. White, *Historiography and Historiophoty*, „American Historical Review”, 1988, no 93.

⁴⁹ Cf. A. Bitov, *The Courage of an Artist*, in: *The Russians Are Coming: Russian Critics on the End of Soviet Cinema*, ed. Michael Brashinsky and Andrew S. Horton, Cambridge 1984–1990.

⁵⁰ D.J. Youngblood, *Repentance. Stalinist Terror and the Realism of Surrealism*, in: *Revisioning History. Film and...*, p. 149.

comes more sensitive through *elephantiasis* of the retrospective form impersonating history.

The film stories of the past are not only the representations creating the history of individuals, but also “a modeled [registration — M.R.] resembling the tale that touches every human”⁵¹. The history has a role of *spiritus movens* for the visualizing of the universal truths. Through reconstruction of the course of events, a historical situation is recalled which takes on an imperative tone, to “not only remember [the past — M.R.], but also tell it so that it cannot be forgotten”⁵².

Within the Anglo-Saxon discourse Thomas Keirstead and Deidre Lynch in their essay *Eijanaika. Japanese Modernization and the Carnival of Time* of 1995 have committed an extremely offensive interpretation of the historical movie. The authors of the essay judge very severely the possibilities of the movie which very often does not let recognize the past events. The motion picture can only hint on the past events, as it implies that the spectators already have some historical knowledge rooted in a specific culture. The researchers from Buffalo are only able to accommodate for the visualization of ordinary people's histories which are an abstract and an essence of the past. The movie can then bring only „a conventional morality”⁵³ and the probable behavior of the past people.

Rudy Koshar, the researcher of ‘national memory’ in the 20th century Germany has proposed an interesting take on the visualization of the past in his essay *Hitler: A Film from Germany. Cinema, History, and Structures* of 1995. The starting point is the attempt to create a historical imagination which could shape popular culture. The visual projecting should become the social construct of the past which evokes the imagination of the average spectator of the movie. Just as Hayden White, Koshar suggests that the concept of *historiophoty* can be recognized as a form of historical tale equivalent to historiography. For the majority of the researchers the motion picture is only a substitute, recognized under the category of the archived material which still requires an inter-

⁵¹ Ibidem, p. 151.

⁵² Ibidem, p. 154.

⁵³ T. Keirstead, D. Lynch, *Eijanaika. Japanese Modernization and the Carnival of Time*, in: *Revisioning History. Film and...*, p. 67.

pretation. *In crudo*, however, the film can get the status of representation which creates the past⁵⁴.

The art of cinema, in the opinion of conservative scholars, can lead to the 'end of history' of scientific nature, as it departs from the tale discourse, and fluctuates toward the performance which assumes a perspective contamination in its approach to the past. The movie creators by marginalizing the historiography attached to the facts show the diversity of the contexts that shape the past. The historic truth is abandoned for the simulation of the act. Can the movie then become congruent to understanding, explaining of the past or the explanation of the modern history which grew within the process of the times? The motion picture according to Koszar becomes dangerous only when it causes the warp in the meta-historical issues and not when it distorts the historical register⁵⁵.

The cinema is the place where one can discuss contradictory interpretations of the past. Can the movie come in handy as a heuristic tool? As the picture of the post-lumiere past is shaped by the cinema machinery building the impression of reality in a wide audience it can additionally manipulate the wide consciousness.

The revision of the past in the non-American discourse.

The attempt to operationalize the paradigm of memory shaped by the motion picture was taken by a prominent scholar from Latin America, John Mraz, the author of the essay *Memories of Underdevelopment. Bourgeois Consciousness / Revolutionary Context* of 1995. The historical film vision influences the individual and social consciousness. The memory which becomes the starting point of the film history allows for collecting the experience of the collectiveness⁵⁶. Going further, it leads to internalization of the outside realities. The historical fiction in the movie very often leads to the humanization of the society by which we understand the drafting of the model of „an ordinary hero”⁵⁷ of the

⁵⁴ R. Koszar, *Hitler: A Film from Germany. Cinema, History, and Structures*, in: *Re-Visioning History. Film and...*, p. 155.

⁵⁵ Ibidem, p. 157.

⁵⁶ J. Mraz, *Memories of Underdevelopment. Bourgeois Consciousness / Revolutionary Context*, in: *Re-Visioning History. Film and...*, p. 102.

⁵⁷ Ibidem, p. 105.

past. The man of the past is entangled in an oppressive reality to which he is in opposition. The movie makers contribute to the solidifying of the vision rules which control the heterogenic societies.

Visualizing of the lives of prominent historical figures presents another story. The facts from their lives are usually trivialized. More attention is paid to the subjective factors that influence the past people's actions and not to the actual events. The movie maker takes advantage of the black and white reflection on reality, letting the audience have a critical approach to what they are seeing. That is why we can easily answer the Sumiko Higashi question about the dead point in history which was not developed by the author. The prominent gender scholar in her essay *Walker and Mississippi Burning. Postmodernism Versus Illusionist Narrative* rejects the "end of history" heralded by the media domination.

For Higashi even Fernand Braudel uses the language of film montage to re-conceptualize the historic time, defining the space and visualization of the historical processes⁵⁸. For historiography the conjunction of synchrony and diachrony poses a huge problem, contrary to the case of illusionistic film representations⁵⁹. 'The visual history' gives the impression of being viewed from a time distance. In the other hand with the use of cinema illusion one can create a parallel between the past and the present. Between the past time and the nonexistent present there is a disjunction which discovers the continuity of some historical processes. The historical film takes on a role of amalgam of the criticism of social relations usually based on the postcolonial discourse canvas.

„Are we then to assume that the film as postmodernist narrative reconceptualizes history?“⁶⁰. Linda Hutcheon points out that the film is a historiographical meta-fiction which creates the consciousness through transforming the forms and content of the past⁶¹. The traditional conceptualization of history is still dominant with objectification which

⁵⁸ Cf. L. Hunt, *French History in the Last Twenty Years: The Rise and Fall of the Annales Paradigm*, „Journal of Contemporary History“, 21, 1986.

⁵⁹ S. Higashi, *Walker and Mississippi Burning. Postmodernism Versus Illusionist Narrative*, in: *Revisioning History. Film and...*, p. 189.

⁶⁰ Ibidem, p. 194.

⁶¹ Cf. L. Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, New York 1988.

represents the past reality, transparent to the truth carried on by the past time. The traditional historical science which is the basis of modernism does not want to allow the film structure, reduced only to a textual forgery. That is why the possibility of coexistence of interdisciplinary dialog between the picture and the historiography is still speculated.

Min Soo Kang in the 1995 essay *The Moderns. Art, Forgery, and a Postmodern Narrative of Modernism* is concerned with the historical events translation done by „the cinematic narrative”⁶². The problem here is the operationalization of the historical experience spread out in space of long lasting, and presented in few hour movie. The viewer of the movie is transported directly into the middle of the historical event. The postmodern movement is based on the historical representation concept which makes it possible to reach the past by creating a continuum between ‘now’ and ‘then’. The movie creators very often leave out facts and go for representation of the mood of the era’s problems. Such a process is achieved by the use of artifacts which signal the cinema space of the historical story. The historical reality becomes a frame for the fictional screen story.

The movie characters only parrot the real people. The theoreticians have always been wondering whether the movie is based on an original or only creates a fake symbol. The paradox of the cinema art lies in the fact of evoking the spectator’s experience of possible historical story which is a simulation of the past. This is the very basis of the work of afore mentioned Pierre Sorlin, the author of the essay *The Night of the Shooting Stars. Fascism, Resistance, and the Liberation of Italy* of 1995. The famous sociology professor notices the difference between the traditional historical movie containing archival materials and a staffage movie about the past which only creates a fictional narrative.

The feature film is based usually on a stereotypical presentation of the characters which uses the myths and the residues of the society’s memory. The past is not used as staffage but for “elegant, artistic pictures”⁶³. Sorlin is not too emphatic when he says that the cinema more than the written text is able to communicate a wide range of infor-

⁶² M. Soo Kang, *The Moderns. Art, Forgery, and a Postmodern Narrative of Modernism*, in: *Revisioning History. Film and...*, p. 116.

⁶³ P. Sorlin, *The Night of the Shooting Stars. Fascism, Resistance, and the Liberation of Italy*, in: *Revisioning History. Film and...*, p. 78.

mation, both accurate facts and [hardly defined — M.R.] impressions of the tamed past⁶⁴. The movie can then become a potential exploitation of the actual situation. The motion picture can at the same time take a role of interpretation for the common vision of the past. In this way, cinema holds the role of an experiment in the history.

Film jako historyczne opowiadanie

Niniejszy artykuł poświęcony jest amerykańskiej koncepcjom „historii wizualnej”, która została rozpowszechniona przez Natalie Zemon Davis, wybitną badaczkę m.in. wczesnonowożytnych dziejów Francji i krajów basenu Morza Śródziemnego. Po przeprowadzeniu kwerendy źródłowej, w 1982 r. została ona konsultantem podczas realizacji filmu *Le retour de Martin Guerre*, stając się tym samym pierwszym „historykiem — filmowcem”, który mógł w pełni ingerować w scenariusz filmowy. Autor prezentuje jej koncepcję filmu historycznego jako „eksperymentu myślowego” oraz odnosi się do jej wizji otwarcia historiografii na „fabularyzowane opowieści filmowe”. Schematyczności historycznych modeli filmowych autor przygląda się z kolei przez pryzmat propozycji Ann Kaplan, która szczególną rolę przypisuje docelowemu odbiorcy dzieła filmowego, jako nośnika wizualnej metafory stosunków społecznych. Wreszcie, prezentuje debatę wokół „historii wizualnej” zapoczątkowaną przez wybitnego teoretyka „nowego filmu historycznego” Roberta A. Rosenstone’a.

Der Film als historische Erzählung

Der letzte Beitrag handelt von der amerikanischen Konzeption „der visuellen Geschichte”, die von Natalie Zemon Davis, einer hervorragenden Forscherin der Frühneuzeit in Frankreich und im Mittelmeerraum, veröffentlicht wurde. Nachdem sie die Quellensuche durchgeführt hatte, wurde sie 1982 Konsultantin bei der Filmproduktion *Le retour de Martin Guerre* und zugleich die erste Historikerin — Filmemacherin, die völlig in das Drehbuch eingreifen konnte. Der Autor dieses Artikels präsentiert ihre Konzeption des Geschichtsfilms als des „Denkexperiments“ und bezieht sich auf ihre Vision, die Historiografie auf „Filmerzählungen“ zu

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 80.

öffnen. Vom Standpunkt des Vorschlags von Ann Kaplan aus betrachtet der Autor die Schematizität historischer Filmmodelle, die eine besondere Rolle dem Zuschauer zuweist, weil er als Träger der visuellen Metapher der gesellschaftlichen Beziehungen betrachtet wird. Schließlich präsentiert der Autor die Debatte um „die visuelle Geschichte“, die von dem hervorragenden Theoretiker „des neuen Geschichtsfilms“ Robert A. Rosenstone eingeleitet wurde.

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